

16th May

A
CALM INVESTIGATION
OF THE
CIRCUMSTANCES
THAT HAVE LED TO THE PRESENT
SCARCITY OF GRAIN
IN
BRITAIN:

Suggesting the MEANS of alleviating that EVIL, and of
preventing the Recurrence of such a CALAMITY
in future.

By JAMES ANDERSON, LL.D.F.R.S.F.S.A.E. &c.

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ARTS, AND MISCELLANEOUS LITERATURE; AND AUTHOR OF
ESSAYS RELATING TO AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL
AFFAIRS; AND SEVERAL OTHER PERFORMANCES.

“Souvent aussi des particuliers, dont l'attention n'est pas absorbée par les soins continuels et infini, qu'exigent des pères de la patrie le grand objet du gouvernement, sont mieux en état de rechercher les causes compliquées de quelque inconvénient de détail, et les moyens les plus faciles d'y remédier.”

Mem. Soc. de Berne, 1762, p. xi.

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TO THE
CONSTITUTIONAL LEGISLATORS

Of the United Kingdom of

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,

The KING, LORDS, and COMMONS,

IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED,

THE FOLLOWING ELUCIDATIONS,

tending to shew the critical situation in which this kingdom at present stands respecting provisions, in consequence of *speculative* opinions having been acted upon as principles of legislation, in some cases of great national concern, and the necessity of speedily recurring to *experience*, as the only safe basis of legislative regulations, if we wish to preserve the tranquillity of the state, and our own existence as a free and independent nation, are respectfully inscribed by

Their ever faithful, humble,

and most obedient servant,

JAMES ANDERSON.

A CALM INVESTIGATION, &c.

AT a time like the present, when every individual is anxious to discover the means of alleviating the distress with which this nation is threatened by a great failure in the crops, it becomes a duty in every member of the community, who has reflected upon the subject, to submit his observations to the public, with a view to elucidate such points as have fallen particularly under his observation in that department of society with which he has been chiefly conversant. Such are the motives that induce me to take up the pen upon the present occasion. The line of life in which I have chiefly moved from my earliest infancy, has obliged me to attend, with an uninterrupted steadiness, to a great number of particulars connected with this subject, in consequence of which I have beheld the approach of the present calamity with a boding anxiety for more than twenty years past; so that at this moment, whatever *concern* I may feel from the events of the present day, they have not excited in my mind the smallest degree of *surprise*. If the present awful moment shall have the effect to induce those who alone have it in their power to remove the evil, to lay aside, for a time, party prejudices, and favourite theories, and to apply their minds seriously to a calm investigation of facts that will speak a strong language, we may in that case, perhaps, have reason at last to be thankful for this severe dispensation of Providence, however afflicting it may be in the mean time, for thus being the means of warding off yet greater evils that

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threaten us. But if the present warning shall be despised, and the subject be considered as of a light and accidental nature, to remove which temporary expedients alone (which only skin over the wound but do not heal it) are necessary, the opportunity once lost may in all probability never return.

For my own part, impelled as I am by a strong sense of duty, and at the same time deeply impressed with a consciousness of the importance of the subject, I shall endeavour to proceed in the task with that steadiness and circumspection which I recommend to others. Totally unconnected as I am with all parties in the state, having scarcely a sensation of partiality for any one person but on account of his good or bad qualities in as far as they can be discovered by his actions, and having now no object in this world but to glide gently down the declivity till the scene closes, I can have no motive of either hope or fear to stimulate to that which reason shall not approve, or to intimidate from doing that which appears to be right. I contemplate a number of human beings around me who have a much greater part of their journey to run than I have; and the reflection, that I shall at least have endeavoured, to the best of my power, to render their passage more smooth and pleasing than it might have been, will prove consolatory when other comforts perhaps may be withdrawn.

Though nothing can be more becoming than the promptitude and steadiness with which both houses of parliament have proceeded to deliberate on the means of giving such *temporary* alleviations to the general distress as fall within their power at the moment to afford; nor perhaps could more proper measures have been devised than most of those which they have adopted for that purpose; yet here they must not stop. The circumstances of the times call for more permanent measures, with a view to guard against the recur-

rence of similar evils. Upon this point I most cordially agree in opinion with those judicious Members in both Houses of Parliament, who, though they see the necessity of some *permanent* measures calculated for this purpose, yet deprecate the idea of any *hasty* and precipitate alterations, which, when not duly deliberated upon, scarcely ever fail to do more harm than good. Could my feeble voice have any influence in this case, it should be exerted in recommending in the most earnest manner, that time be allowed for the coolest deliberation and the utmost investigation of the subject, in order that the minds of men, which have been taken as it were by surprise, from the unexpected and sudden appearance of this alarming malady, may have leisure to regain their wonted tranquillity, so as to be allowed to pursue the inquiry with that caution which the importance of the subject requires.

That it is a matter of considerable difficulty to discover what is best, no one will presume to deny: that some radical error has imperceptibly crept into the system of legislation respecting the production of corn, few persons who attend to the situation of this country at the present moment, and for some time past, in regard to this particular, will have much hesitation to admit. If errors have been committed, these cannot be of the most obvious nature, otherwise the majority of both Houses of Parliament could not have inadvertently been led into them; their *judgment*, therefore, must have been misled, not their *will* perverted. An error in judgment however, wherever it does take place, cannot be corrected in a moment. The mind, when it has been accustomed for a long time to view any object in a certain light, cannot, without great leisure and reiterated efforts, be brought to view it in another: but if it be awakened by alarming incidents, first to entertain a doubt that it may have been wrong, though it cannot see how or where, yet, while in this

state it will advert to facts when they present themselves that it would not otherwise have regarded ; and it may come thus by degrees to discover the right path, and voluntarily relinquish an error, which it would perhaps have retained with pertinacity had it been suddenly forced by an ill advised temerity hastily to decide. There are many men of sound understanding and excellent dispositions in this country, who, from their situations in society, have had time and opportunity, through the course of a long life, to make patient investigations with regard to matters of this kind ; who, though they have no desire to obtrude themselves on the world, like the busy bodies that are continually on the watch for any popular topic to display their folly, will yet be invited when a proper opportunity occurs (more especially should they see that men of eminence are disposed to listen to the suggestions of experience) to step forward, and communicate, with temper and moderation, the result of their judicious observations. A few men of this description, when they are thus induced to exert themselves, prove highly beneficial to society.—All of them having the same object in view, though each may deviate into some particular error, which the fallibility of human nature must ever induce, yet these unintentional errors will be kindly corrected by the others, and truth will thus be at last established ; but in precipitate councils nothing of that kind can take place ; and distress in this instance, as in every exertion produced by inconsiderate impulse, must be the consequence.

I have observed with no small degree of concern, for many years past, among men who justly rank with the foremost in respect to talents in this country, a tendency to cherish an opinion, that Britain is incapable of producing provisions sufficient for maintaining its increasing population. This is a prejudice that derives its origin entirely from ideas that have been casually imbibed in youth ;
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and which, from the situation of life in which these persons move, they never have had an opportunity of correcting, from experience. Had these persons been in the practice of experiencing, from their own operations, the effects of proper culture upon the soil, as I have been, they never could have suffered such unfounded notions to have disturbed their rest, or to have influenced their conduct; as, I am sorry to say, it has done in some very important public concerns. The earth is an indulgent mother to all her children, ever ready to yield her stores in abundance to all those who know properly how to draw them from her; nor is there any person at this moment alive (or ever did exist), properly acquainted with things of that nature, who can say that he ever saw a country, situated as this is, which had made but an approximation towards its utmost degree of possible productiveness. As to this country in its present state, rich as it may be deemed by many, I do not know that I have ever yet seen a single acre of it that could not be made to yield a considerable deal more of human sustenance than it now does: and there are perhaps few acres within this island (bare rock or water excepted) which might not be brought by human industry, continued for a sufficient length of time, to a state of productiveness nearly equal to the best in it at present.

I am aware, that though I speak thus, as a farmer, from my own personal experience, and do it without the smallest dread of being contradicted at any future period by those who have had equal experience with myself; I have but little chance of making an impression on the minds of those who have been accustomed, without experience, to judge otherwise; and it is much to be regretted, that so few of even those who follow rural occupations in this country have been accustomed to view the matter in the light wherein I now place it: yet that
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the fact is so, there can be no doubt ; and I shall have little difficulty, I believe, in the course of this investigation, to produce such proofs of it as will, it may be hoped, be sufficient to remove all the fears that have been entertained on this head.

On the influence of an increased population on the price of Grain.

A LAW has been enacted during the present session of parliament, for the purpose of ascertaining the number of people in Britain ; which should have passed over without notice by me, had I not perceived, that it points to an intended line of conduct which can never prove salutary, but must be always destructive in the highest degree, viz. That of attempting to direct the details of private business by the intervention of legal regulations. This is a thing that has been attempted so often, has been so universally found to prove inefficacious as to the purpose proposed, and has so frequently produced an effect directly the reverse of what was intended by it, that one might have thought this reiterated experience alone, without any exertion of reasoning (which has often been successfully employed to shew that it never could be otherwise), would have been sufficient to prevent men from now recurring to it *. But if that be not the intention
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* Mirabeau the elder, in contemplating this very subject, thus writes in the year 1760. ‘ Le delire de la plupart des gouvernemens fut de se croire preposés a tout faire, & d’agir en consequence, tandis qu’ils ne font en effet qu’a laisser faire et empêcher l’injustice et la lésion. Une des suites les plus naturelle de ce prestige, et celle que surprend le plus par l’apparence du devoir, c’est de se croire obligé de veiller à la subsistence de sujets de l’état. Rome dans sa splendeur, la plus cruel et la plus désastre des
républiques

of bringing forward this law, For what purpose was it brought forward at the present time? If that be the intention, it will require but very little political acumen to prove, that it cannot effect the purpose aimed at. Either the amount of the population can be ascertained with accuracy, or it cannot. If this particular cannot be ascertained with precision, which I could bring very satisfactory reasons to shew must be the case *, then it must be

republiques se croyoit, dans le tems même de ses mœurs austères, obligée de faire des distributions de bled a des citoyens oisifs qui rendoient les délibérations de la place si orageuses, et ces distributions mêmes devinrent enfin le prix de son esclavage. Un branche de cette erreur a asservi et détruit la plus intéressante portion de l'agriculture, et a introduit le monopole sur les campagnes et sur les cultivateurs."

In quoting such passages as these I wish to free myself from the imputation of entertaining paradoxical opinions: for although it does not require the spirit of inspiration, to discover that whatever tends to make the lower classes of men rely upon any thing else than their own industrious exertions for their support, must have a necessary tendency to unnerve the arm of industry, and introduce the most destructive of all disorders into the system of political economy; and that the trying to enforce such a system by legislative coercions must tend still further to augment the evils thus begun; yet it is of use to shew that others have traced these effects when it could not be suspected that any allusion could be made to the present situation of things, and where of course neither passion, nor prejudice, nor interest of any sort, could have tended to influence the judgment. The same author afterwards adds: "On crut devoir, peser la pain à tous les sujets de l'état..... tenir enfin sans cesse dans des mains toujours trop foibles et trop incertain pour un tel emploi, le thermometre de la subsistance publique, et marquer le tarif d'une denrée, dont il est impossible de connoître le prix naturel." He then proceeds to shew that the necessary consequences are to frighten away farmers from their accustomed employment, and thus to diminish the quantity of grain produced, and of course to augment its price, and so on.

* Many attempts have been made to ascertain the population of this country, but hitherto they have all proved illusive; and in a country circumstanced as this is, measures much stronger must be adopted, than any that have hitherto been attempted, before it can be otherwise. It is impossible to prevent a number of individuals from believing, when a measure of this kind is brought forward with the smallest countenance of the

be avowedly nugatory. But even if it could be ascertained truly, still it must prove equally nugatory; for the only use that can be made of it under this point of view, is
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the members of administration, that more is "meant than meets the eye;" they therefore, from a spirit of jealousy, resolve to frustrate the intent. In this way, I had an opportunity, a few years ago, to see an attempt made to number the people of Edinburgh, at the instance of Sir John Sinclair, in which more care was taken to insure success than it is in the power of any administration in this country ever to enforce over the whole country at large. The magistrates of that place were so far zealous in the cause, at that time, that they themselves actually went round in person from house to house in taking up the lists, with a view to ensure true returns; yet in spite of all this pains, I myself, who was then upon the spot, knew many instances where three or four were returned in place of five, six, or eight persons in the family; so that I am altogether certain that that enumeration did not come within one fourth part of the truth. Similar deceptions must in all cases be expected where the people who take up the lists are serious, and a true return is made.—But how is that to be expected in the present case?

Where much duty is required of any set of men in which they have no direct interest, it can never fail but that it must be performed with more or less remissness, according to the dispositions of the persons respectively employed. In the present case, much of that sort of duty is expected from the parochial clergy. Many of these are little in the habit of attending to such employments, and therefore can know very little about the proper mode of proceeding; many of them will look upon it as an office that ill accords with their clerical functions, and will therefore think it enough if they indulge their natural indolence by deputing others in their stead. Too many of those among the clergy who take an active concern in country affairs are unfortunately at variance with a great part of their parishioners, on account of tithes, who must expect to meet with every obstruction that can be devised to prevent them from attaining the truth. What could be expected of a true return made from them, but that the population in some places would be stated greatly under the truth, when in others it might come near it? But in this case a true return from *all* is not to be expected. Most of those who take any concern in the business will know that the returns brought to them are obviously fallacious; they will therefore feel an inclination to supply these defects from conjecture. In these conjectures, the weakness of human nature

to ascertain the *ratio* of the progression between one period and another ; for that the population of this country has been advancing for several centuries, is admitted). But it is admitted also, that the population of this country has never hitherto been ascertained on principles that were not highly controvertible ; and it is a well known principle, that without three fixed points, a series of progression between them can never be ascertained : but unless we had two former points fixed the proportional ratio of that progression between the two first and the two last can never be ascertained. To get one fixed point then, is nothing ; so that it is altogether impossible, by this method, to ascertain whether the population of the country has been advancing faster or slower during the last fifty years than at any other period ; and if so, *Cui bono ?*

As I shall, I trust, be able to shew with demonstrative evidence, during the progress of the present discussion, that, although the ratio of this progression of population could be ascertained with the utmost precision, it could never be made of any use, either to account for the present scarcity, or to mitigate its effects ; I should have allowed it to pass in silence, had I not foreseen that hypotheses may be grounded on these false data, which may tend to bewilder the judgement, and distract the attention from facts of the most material importance. With a view, then, at once to shew the futility of this attempt, I shall beg leave to refer to the annexed table, exhibiting the pro-

ture will always give a bias towards that side which they think will prove most acceptable to those whose favour they wish to obtain ; and, as it is very obvious, at the present time, that the favourite hypotheses of the supporters of administration is, that the population is very great, it is easy to see to which side those who wish to ingratiate themselves must lean. From these and other considerations, I am perfectly satisfied that the enumeration expected must prove greatly fallacious ; and that though, in a few instances, it may be near the truth, yet that in general it must err on the side of excess.

gress of importation and exportation of corn, and the price of grain, in this century; and to point out the obvious inferences that result from that, when compared with the statement made of the population of this country, by the learned mover of the aforesaid bill in parliament.

From the statement given by Mr. Abbott on that occasion, it appears, that the population of Great Britain about the time of the Revolution was 6,500,000, and in the year 1763 it amounted to 8,500,000; at this rate, there has been made an addition of two millions to our population in the space of 66 years. The population at the present period is uncertain. Some persons state it, we are told, at no more than eight millions, others at ten; and the learned gentleman himself conjectures that it may be about eleven millions. Good reasons might be adduced to render it probable, that the advance of population has not been more rapid during the last half of the century than the former*.

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* In the former part of this century, during the long administration of Sir Robert Walpole especially, Great Britain enjoyed a state of security and domestic tranquillity that was doubtless more favourable for population than it has experienced during the latter part of it. Our colonies, both in the West and East Indies, were then much less extensive; our armies were smaller; our naval force much less considerable; and our seamen in the mercantile service far less numerous; but it is evident, that, in proportion to the number of persons engaged in any of these employments, there must be a slower increase in the natural rise of population. What I consider as still of much more consequence is, that at the first period the agriculture of this country was in a flourishing state; and a much greater number of persons employed in the healthful and innocent operations in the fields than they now are. And it is universally known, that no situation is so favourable for a natural increase of people as that is. Provisions, too, were cheap; and the charge of a family much easier borne than at present. Many of those country labourers being now drawn into towns, or great manufacturing houses, are thrown into a state of dissipation that is perhaps as unfavourable for the increase of men as can be conceived. An equal number, then, of the lower classes of the people must, I think, unquestionably increase more slowly now than

Let us, however, to avoid unnecessary altercation on this head, admit that it has really been greater. If the increase of population were supposed to have any influence on the price of corn, and the productiveness of this country, it ought to have had a *similar* effect during the whole of this century; and the only difference must have been a greater *rapidity* of effect (if you will admit that phrase) during the latter than the former part of that period. Look at the table, and see how facts correspond with this hypothesis? I there find, that, during the first part of the century, from 1700 to 1750, there has been a regular and progressive *fall* of price, so as to have sunk gradually from 2*l.* 18*s.* 1*d.* to 1*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* per quarter of wheat; and that during the last part of the century, from 1750 to 1800, there has been a progressional *rise* of price, nearly as regular, from 1*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* to 5*l.* 10*s.* per quarter. Here the effects are not of the same *kind*, and not differing in degree only, but of a nature diametrically opposite to each other.

That the reader may have under his eye at one view the whole state of facts respecting the commerce of corn,

than then; and the amazing increase of the poor's rates affords but too full a proof of the increasing misery of that class of persons.

If we turn our eyes to those of middling stations, and higher ranks, we cannot be authorized to draw a different conclusion. A great number of gentlemen's families lived at the first period, in peace and content, upon moderate incomes, on their estates in the country. A man was not then ashamed of a moderate competency, and therefore married, and lived in quiet in the bosom of a contented family. No man now could think of such a thing. Marriage must be postponed till he has obtained a *fortune*. In the meanwhile he lives how he can; spends the best of his days in tending to decrease rather than to increase the subjects of the state; and, in nine cases out of ten, dies without leaving any legitimate issue. Is it in this state of society that population can be expected to increase? These, and other considerations of a similar sort, are sufficient to satisfy me, that the population of this country has advanced less rapidly during the latter part of the eighteenth century than the first. Nor can any statement of numbers obtained in the way it must be, convince me to the contrary.

and the prices, with other circumstances connected with this elucidation, a table is subjoined, exhibiting at one view the average quantities of corn exported from and imported into this country, for the different periods there stated, and of the average London prices of wheat, from the year 1696 (when the register of corn exported or imported began to be kept) to the present time, with the prices of wheat, from the year 1650 downwards.

By casting an eye over this table, it is seen, at the first glance, to arrange itself into two parts after the bounty commenced, which differ in one very striking particular, *viz.* that in the *first* part the exports invariably exceed the imports, and in the *second* the imports as invariably exceed the exports.

It is farther observable, that the excess of exports above imports was very small at the beginning of this period, and continued gradually to increase, in a regular progression, till it attained its greatest height, *anno* 1750; after which time, the balance of imports began to lessen, and soon went to the opposite side; the exports exceeding the imports, at first, to a small amount, whence they went on gradually, increasing, as they did before, on the opposite side of the account; but with a progression much more rapid than before, and to a much greater amount.

From this simple view of the case, two deductions present themselves as inevitable consequences of the state of facts here exhibited: the *first* is, that the great deficiency of crops, which is indicated by the necessity for such an immense importation of late years, cannot be attributed to any augmentation of population that may be supposed to have taken place within the time; for it is known, and admitted on all hands, that the population of this country was on the increase during the first half of this century as well as the last (nor has it been as yet proved that the *amount* of that increase was not as great
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in the first as in the subsequent period; many persons, among whom I rank myself, believing that it was at least equal to it); yet during the first period, the amount of our *exports* was continually upon the increase; whereas, on the contrary, during the latter part of this century, our *imports* have been increasing with a progression as regular and more rapid than the former. It is altogether impossible that the same circumstance, operating alike at both periods, and nearly, if not entirely, with equal power, should have been productive of effects so directly opposite to each other. The *second* inference is, that neither can these phenomena be attributed to the seasons; for this would be to suppose, that during the first half of this century the seasons had continued in a gradual course of melioration for fifty years, and, from that time to the present, had been as steadily growing worse and worse from year to year; facts that are not warranted in the smallest degree by any registers of the weather, or the common experience of mankind. That there ever must be occasional variations of seasons, at all periods of time, will be allowed; and that they will now occur, as in times past, cannot be doubted: but such a regular progression as is here indicated, continued for so long a period, was never known to take place in any country on the globe; and, in regard to this particular case, it would be easy to prove, by undeniable evidence, that a greater number of inclement seasons did actually occur during the first part of this century, while plenty prevailed, than during the latter part of it, when our supplies have become so glaringly deficient.

A third particular, to which I beg leave to direct the attention of the reader, in examining this table, is, the price of corn; that he may remark the singular coincidence which has subsisted between the price of corn and the state of exports and imports. From the year 1696, when

when our exports of corn were next to nothing, until the year 1750, when our exports exceeded one million and a half of quarters, the price was gradually on the decline, till at the latter period (making allowance for the different value of money) it was less than one-half of what it bore in the former. From that time, as our exports decreased, the price of corn rose, and gradually kept pace with our increased imports till the present year, when it has resumed nearly its first rate.

These particulars afford the clearest indications, that the state of our crops and the prices of our corn are affected by some great and powerful circumstances, which have not, at the present time at least, attracted the attention of our legislators, or of the public at large; for as to the clamour that has been made about forestallers, regraters, the war, inclement seasons, and many other particulars, it is plain, that, whatever partial effects these may occasion, they never could have operated steadily in producing effects of the kind here brought under review.

I have chosen, at the outset of this discussion, to begin with an appeal to facts, as the only decisive test, that I know, of the accuracy of any arguments that can be adduced in cases of this nature; and fortunate it would be for this country, if no arguments should ever be listened to in such serious concerns that were not corroborated by facts. I have chosen to do it the more particularly on this occasion, because, however much it may embarrass some persons to reconcile these facts to the theories to which they have formed an attachment, it will give no trouble to me to solve them upon principles, that I conceive to be undeniably deducible by sound reasoning; and on facts that were known to exist long before those took place which occasion the present discussion. And, however much I regret the circumstance that induces me to come forward upon the present occasion, it cannot fail to afford me a

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secret satisfaction, to reflect that long before the evil took place I did what was in my power to ward it off, by pointing out, with as much perspicuity as I was able, the consequences that must necessarily result from measures which were at that time recommended from high authority, and which I thought were in danger of being incautiously acted upon. In this opinion I have chanced, unfortunately for this country, to be too well founded; and the consequences have accorded but too accurately with the judgment I had formed of them. It is of much importance that I should now refer to arguments that were written and published nearly thirty years ago; which clearly, as I then thought, demonstrated that the very distress under which this country now labours must, sooner or later, of necessity, result from the measures pointed at; and which have been pursued with a too steady perseverance since that time; because facts, which were then in the womb of futurity, coming thus to corroborate reasoning, ought to give to that reasoning an authoritative influence, to which it could not otherwise have laid claim. By reverting to the same chain of reasoning, we shall have no difficulty in explaining the facts stated in the table before us; and these facts will at the same time afford the most convincing proof that could be adduced of the justness of the reasoning.

I have no hesitation, then, in saying, unequivocally, that the whole facts, brought under view in the foregoing table, however contradictory they are in appearance, may be clearly accounted for, solely by adverting to the changes that have taken place respecting the corn-laws within the period to which they refer. Let me not be understood to say, that no other causes have contributed to augment or diminish the amount of the effect that the corn-laws alone have produced. I know that other causes have had an influence, and a powerful influence too, in co-operating

rating with these: but those other causes operating alone would have produced other phenomena than the table exhibits, and no other cause but the corn-laws could have occasioned these phenomena. I shall proceed then, in the first place, to examine the effects of the corn-laws on the price of corn, and the general productiveness of this country; and then advert to other circumstances that have co-operated to augment these effects.

On the Operation of the Corn-Laws.

Soon after Dr. Adam Smith's excellent work on the wealth of nations was published, it fell into my hands. I read it with the attention that it deserved, and with no small degree of satisfaction and improvement in many respects; but the satisfaction was not without alloy. While I admired the liberality of his general turn of thinking, the ingenuity of his arguments, the perspicuity of arrangement, and the acute accuracy of discrimination, that are eminently conspicuous in that work, I could not help lamenting that in it, as in all others that I have seen on practical subjects, which have been written by speculative men, the conclusions were, on too many occasions, deduced from theoretical principles, rather than from a patient induction of actual facts. It is much to be lamented, that, when the mind is thus occupied with preconceived notions, many important facts are suffered to escape notice; and those only are deemed worthy of attention which serve to corroborate the favourite hypothesis. When a mind is under the influence of this disposition, acuteness of talents only tends to lead it the farther astray, by suggesting plausible combinations, that serve only to prevent the objects from appearing in their true light to the inquirer himself; and, of course, he will find no difficulty in represent-

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ing them under false colours to others. Few writers, of eminence, in modern times have been more frequently under the influence of this fascinating power than the author of the *Wealth of Nations*. This will, no doubt, be discovered when that work shall come to be examined with attention; but in no one particular, that I have had occasion to notice, has he been so grievously misled as with regard to the influence of the corn-laws; concerning which he had formed a favourite hypothesis, which he cherished with that kind of pertinacity that is in general attached to every kind of bigotry. But facts not being at all times easy to be reconciled to this hypothesis, the mind became, as it were, irritated, so as to catch at every appearance of an argument in its favour, wherever that occurred. Thus is the subject of the corn-laws recurred to again and again, in many parts of Dr. Smith's work; and peevish assertions come at length to be mistaken for arguments respecting it*. It is to this circumstance alone that I am inclined to ascribe the many inconsistent, and even contradictory, remarks that occur respecting the corn-laws in various parts of his ingenious work. These, I should have passed over, as indications only of one of those natural weaknesses to which the greatest of men must ever be subjected, while they continue in this imperfect state of existence, had I not been aware of the evil consequences that must result to the community at large if these notions should ever get such firm hold of the minds of young men of superior station as to come, in time, to be acted upon as

* For example, when Dr. Smith found himself pressed by the obvious argument, that the price of corn had declined ever since the bounty was established, while that of other commodities had been almost universally advancing, he attributes this circumstance solely to the general prosperity of the nation, which resulted from the revolution; and he peevishly asserts, "that the price of corn had not been lowered in consequence of the bounty, but in spite of it." As if the same argument would not equally apply to the price of all other commodities.

sound principles in legislation. Being aware of this at the time I read that work, I thought it my duty to counteract its influence, as much as it was in my power, by a careful consideration of each particular, accompanied with a refutation of it. These remarks occur in a work that I was writing at the time, and which was published, in the year 1777, under the title of *Observations on the Means of exciting a Spirit of national Industry, chiefly as applicable to Scotland*. A juvenile performance, that has had very little sale, and attracted very little notice. The principles that are laid down in these observations, however, (see P. S. to Letter XII.) on this subject at least, I think I may now take upon me to say, are established incontrovertibly; not only because no one has yet attempted to refute them, not even Dr. Smith himself, (to whom a copy of the work was sent as soon as it was published,) though he told our common friend Dr. Cullen, immediately after he read it, that he thought it required an answer, which he intended to give it; and he did, to my knowledge, take measures to ascertain some facts with that view*; but, upon maturer consideration, it would seem, he relinquished the design. My conviction of the truth of these observations, however,

* One error, into which I had inadvertently fallen, from my ignorance of a particular meaning annexed to a word, I was led, in consequence of these inquiries, to discover. Being at that time better acquainted with the Latin language, and the English as derived from it, than that of the custom-house, I inadvertently stated that no corn had ever been exported from the *port* of Aberdeen; conceiving that word to be synonymous with *harbour*. I have since learned, that, in the language of the custom-house, this is an unpardonable error; for, that no harbour is a port, except those only in which a set of custom-house officers are established: so that on the west of Scotland there may, perhaps, be a hundred harbours, in which all the navy of England might ride in safety, without one *port*. I do believe, that, at this moment, the *portus salutis* of Ptolomy is not entitled to the name of a *port*. This error was evidently occasioned by pure ignorance of this circumstance on my part; because, in the same page, I mention exports from a harbour, which is deemed only a creek of the port of Aberdeen.

now rests upon much stronger grounds than even the abandonment of his hypothesis by Dr. Smith could have afforded; *viz.* the undeniable and striking coincidence of succeeding facts with the reasoning there detailed. The reader will easily believe, that I would not have taken notice of these circumstances here, had it not been with a view thus to give a degree of weight to arguments which I think of material consequence to the well-being, if not to the very existence, of the nation, to be seriously adverted to on the present occasion. I think it, indeed, of so much consequence that such inductions should now be adverted to, that, did I know any other legitimate means of recommending the subject more forcibly to public notice than these I now use, I should certainly adopt them: for, although I myself can neither expect to be materially benefited by their being attended to, nor hurt by the neglect; yet many millions of persons, who will never behold the sun at the same time with myself, will have their situations deeply affected by it.

The great object in all Dr. Smith's observations on the corn-laws was, to impress the minds of his readers with an idea, not only that any efficient bounty on the exportation of corn was an useless expenditure of the public money, but that it also tended always to enhance the price of corn above its natural value; and that the trade in corn ought to be left at all times perfectly free, without the influence of either duties or bounties of any sort: an opinion that has been rigidly adopted from him by many persons, and which we hear repeatedly bandied from one to another even in the most respectable assemblies of this nation. There is something, indeed, so fascinating in the word *freedom*, that I cannot at all wonder at those who do not think, being captivated with it. In opposition to this doctrine, however, I endeavoured to prove, by the closest chain of reasoning that I was able to discover, that a

well regulated and efficient bounty on the exportation, and duty on importation of corn, must have a necessary and continual tendency, *First*, to moderate the average price of corn, so as to make it, upon the whole, lower than it could possibly have been without it; *Second*, to encourage the production of corn, so as necessarily to augment the quantity in the home market, and thus preclude the danger of such a scarcity at any time occurring as to occasion the smallest dread of any thing approaching to a famine: and, *Thirdly*, what I consider as, if possible, a still higher benefit to the state than the former, it would have the happiest and the most powerful tendency to prevent those fluctuations in the prices of corn, which is of all political evils that I know the most destructive, because it produces such a derangement in the internal economy of a state, and such a train of moral and political evils, as a volume would not be sufficient to detail.—From these three considerations alone, setting aside its innumerable beneficial effects on the population, industry, manufactures, commerce, national wealth, public tranquillity, and augmentation of revenue, I contended, that it was a measure fraught with multiplied advantages, and *that it could not be abandoned without endangering the welfare of the people, and the very existence of this kingdom, as an independent nation.*

I do not mean at the present time to recur to the arguments which I then used with a view to establish these positions; they have been already detailed, and are within the reach of those who have a curiosity for such inquiries: nor do I take any merit to myself, as having made that discovery. The truth of these positions had been recognized by thousands long before I was born, and will be recognized by millions after I shall be in my grave. I am only
proud

proud to enlist myself as an humble coadjutor of a band of patriots, who for public spirit and solidity of judgment, have long received the tribute of applause to which they were so justly entitled. At this time I shall content myself, for a proof of the positions, with a bare recurrence to facts which now stare us in the face, and speak a language infinitely more forcible than words can ever be made to do. Could I convince myself, that my humble influence could have weight sufficient to make these facts be examined by those persons who alone have it in their power to avail themselves of them, with that scrutinising attention that the importance of the occasion calls for, I should be satisfied, nothing doubtful of the consequence: It is not refutation that I dread, but remissness.

The prices of corn had been so variable in Britain, during the whole of the former century, and in general so high, that the attention of the legislature had been frequently called towards that subject; and various attempts had been made to revive agriculture, with a view to moderate these evils, by encouraging the exportation and checking the importation of corn: but in these incipient efforts the principles of legislation were so imperfectly understood, as always to be counteracted by the more powerful preponderancy of *revenue* considerations. Towards the end of the century, however, the prices of corn had been uniformly so high*, and on some occasions so oppressive, as to induce the truly patriotic and judicious administration under William and Mary, immediately after the Revolution, to apply their minds seriously, and in good earnest, to discover some means by which that evil

* The average price of wheat for fifty years before the year 1700, was 3*l.* 11*s.* 11*d.* per quarter; and its average price before 1650, was 6*l.* 8*s.* 10*d.* Vide Dirom, app. No. 1.

might be effectually obviated in future. On that occasion the capacious minds of these great men formed the grand idea of moderating the price of grain by seeming to raise it. They considered the production of corn as a manufacture, in the same light as the fabricating of a yard of broad cloth ; with this difference, that the first was an article of indispensable necessity, the other not ; and therefore they wisely judged, that since experience had long demonstrated that no inducement could prove so effectual to encourage other manufactures, as that of insuring ready sales at a fair price, to indemnify the undertakers for their labour and expenditure upon them, so, in like manner, they perceived that the production of corn could in no other way be effectually promoted. They had at the same time the penetration to see, that as seasons must ever be variable, so as to occasion a much greater quantity of corn to be produced with the same exertions of industry in one year than in another, they could in no way so easily insure abundance to people at home, when the crop became deficient, as by freeing farmers from all dread of rearing more corn in a good year, than could be consumed by the inhabitants. They also foresaw, that if no means could be devised for finding a market for that surplus produced in a good year at a reasonable rate, the prices must then fall so low as to ruin the farmers, or oblige them to abandon the culture of corn, and to turn the land to some other use ; so that scarcity and high prices must frequently recur as formerly. From all these considerations combined, they adopted the magnanimous resolution of granting a certain *bounty* upon the exportation of corn when the crops were so abundant as to make the price fall below such a rate as they conceived was necessary to indemnify the farmer for his expence and trouble, so as just to enable them to find a market for it then in places abroad :—And, with a view at the same time to prevent a competition of foreigners

in our home market when *they* might chance to have an unusually abundant crop, and to guard at the same time against the machinations of corn dealers, who might, for certain purposes, occasionally introduce a great deal of foreign corn into the home market, so as to lower the price of a moderate crop in Britain, below its intrinsic value, they imposed certain duties on corn imported, which rose or fell in proportion to the selling price at the time in our own market, as protecting duties; aiming, by these regulations, as much as possible to preserve an equality and moderation of price at all times in the home market.

Such were the principles of the celebrated corn law, which was first enacted in the year 1688, and finally completed anno 1700, which has since that time attracted the notice and obtained the highest eulogiums of all the nations of Europe; and, with very few exceptions, of every thinking individual who has considered the subject. As a *prospective* regulation, I consider it one of the highest exertions of human wisdom: for the beneficial tendencies that have resulted from it in practice, and to which we can now refer as *facts* to inform our judgment, could be only contemplated by the devisers of that law, as plausible probabilities:—And although the mode of applying these principles in practice was not, perhaps, in all respects so perfect as it possibly might have been, yet the benefits that resulted from it, with all its alledged imperfections, were such, for the course of more than fifty years, during which time it was acted upon with some degree of steadiness, as to make us now have reason sincerely to regret that ever it was altered; for we shall but too surely find, that every deviation from these principles has been for the worse: and for the proof of this position, I now recur to the facts exhibited in the table.

But

But before I proceed to this investigation, I beg leave to state, that I take no merit to myself respecting the part of the disquisition that I am about to enter upon. At the time that I combated Dr. Smith's opinions, I did it upon the same ground that he had taken, by shewing that the facts he had stated, and the arguments he adduced in support of his hypothesis, by no means authorised the conclusions that he wished to establish, but directly the reverse. Long after my treatise was published, a gentleman of my acquaintance, of a very sound judgment and of great respectability in the north of Scotland, having observed with attention, and experienced in fact, the very evils that I had foreseen, set himself seriously to prosecute the investigation by a careful induction of all facts, within his reach, that were connected with the corn-laws, whether as causes or consequences of them. With that view he formed numerous tables exhibiting these facts under different points of view, and explaining them by an accurate commentary fraught with a variety of elucidations full of intelligence and sound sense; but death carried him off before they were published. In this state his observation remained in manuscript ready for the press from the year 1786, when the author died, till the year 1796, when his son, after his return from India, published the whole in a quarto volume, under the title of *An Inquiry into the Corn Laws and Trade of Great Britain, and their influence on the prosperity of the kingdom, by the late Alexander Dirom, Esq. of Muireisk, in the county of Aberdeen*, published by Nichol, London. This work was brought down to the end of the year 1784, by the author himself. To this there is added a supplement, by Mr. William Mackie of Ormiston, in East Lothian, consisting of two letters to Lieutenant-Colonel Dirom, the son of the author, and editor of the work, bringing it
down

down to the year 1791. These letters contain additional illustrations highly important, in which the writer takes a wider range in some respects than the author of the work itself, and elucidates a variety of points intimately connected with the subject, in a train of close reasoning that has but few equals. In short I know no practical work on the subject of legislation, where so many important facts are collected together within so narrow a compass (except, perhaps, Smith's *Memoirs of Wood*), or so clearly illustrated, as this is;—nor do I know any one that is so deserving the careful attention of legislators of every denomination. Yet this truly valuable work, though it has been now published above five years, has been, as I have reason to believe, but little read, and has perhaps scarcely ever been heard of before by most of my readers. To this work I am chiefly indebted for the facts in the foregoing tables. The remarks that follow are not copied from it. For my present purpose, I must content myself with a few general deductions from the facts there stated, to convey to the reader a hasty view of the matter; but no person who wishes to obtain full information on this subject should be satisfied without reading that book itself with a careful attention, by which, if I mistake not, he will profit not a little. From this unqualified eulogium, however, I beg leave to except the whole of the fifth chapter, which is of a speculative nature; and to many arrangements suggested in it strong objections might be urged were it here necessary.

The view of our legislators, when they enacted the law of 1688, may be gathered from the preamble to that act, which run thus: “Forasmuch as it hath been found by experience, that the exportation of corn and grain into foreign parts, when the price thereof is at a low rate in

this kingdom, hath been a great advantage, not only to the owners of land, but to the trade of this kingdom in general : be it therefore enacted, &c.” The augmentation of trade, therefore, not less than the encouragement of agriculture, were the objects they contemplated : it does not, however, appear, that at the time of its enactment they had in their eye the encouragement of *manufactures*, which succeeding experience has clearly proved that it was equally calculated to effect, by diminishing the average price of corn ; an object that has been often attempted by other means, which have *all* proved not only ineffectual, but uniformly pernicious, by augmenting the very evil that they were intended to diminish. This law however, so beneficial in other respects, though in a silent and imperceptible manner (by one of those reactions so frequent in the system of political economy, which, like the eddy of a current, produces an effect directly the reverse of what it appears to be calculated to effectuate), is now proved by experience completely to have done it, as the table now before us clearly evinces.

From this table it appears, that the average price of wheat for forty years before the year 1690 was 2*l.* 14*s.* 9*d.* per quarter ; and that for forty years posterior to 1720, (during which period that salutary law was suffered to operate with no material interruption) it was only 1*l.* 16*s.* 2*d.* From the same table it plainly appears, that this fall had not been produced by casual and temporary vibrations, but by a regular progression, corresponding with the increase of exportation with a surprising coincidence, from the year 1700, when the price was 3*l.* 8*s.* 3*d.* and the exports scarcely any thing, to the year 1750, when the price was reduced to 1*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* and the exports had amounted to 1,667,140 quarters : so that, while our exports were thus rapidly augmenting, the price of corn was in an
equal

equal manner declining, until it came to less than one half of its former rate*. Thus, in the language of Mr. Dirom, " These salutary laws had increased the export-trade of corn to an amazing extent, while plenty remained at home, and the prices continued moderate." [p. 92.]

But, notwithstanding this moderation of price, which had been obviously the result of this law, and which therefore ought to have made a legislature extremely cautious how they ventured to derange its operations, it happened, that, in consequence of a trifling deficiency of crop, and a consequent diminution of exports, with a

* It deserves to be here particularly remarked, that in estimating the price of any article at different periods of time, it becomes extremely difficult to form a judgment that shall not be fallacious. Not only do great variations occur in a short period of time owing to alterations of the coins bearing the same denominations (thus anno 1547 the shilling contained in value of silver of the present day 1s. 3d., and in 1549, only two years after, the shilling was worth only 10d.), but the actual value of an equal weight of silver at different periods is very different also. Dr. Dirom in constructing his tables has allowed for the *first*, and has attempted to estimate the *last* by making the same weight of coin indicate a value greater proportioned to the higher rate of interest money bore at one period or the other. This is an approximation towards the truth, but it can by no means be admitted to be correct. Ever since the year 1714, the legal weight and interest of money have been the same in this country, and therefore one pound then is stated to be exactly equal in value to one pound now—but I presume there are few persons who will not be ready to admit that a person who has an income of one hundred pounds now could not live as well and procure as many of the conveniences of life, as he would have purchased with the same income at the former period. I fancy few persons will be disposed to deny that the same income could have then gone at least twice as far as in the present day. As *this kind* of value of money has been gradually on the decrease through the whole of this century, and does not enter into account in these tables, I should not, I conceive, be guilty of an error, were I to say, that 1l. 12s. 6d. in the year 1720, was not equal to one third part of 3l. 11s.—the price of wheat anno 1696—That must be allowed to be an amazing diminution on the price of the necessaries of life.

small rise of price, the legislature, prompted no doubt by the suggestions of interested individuals, who are ever on the watch for such occasions, and urged on by the clamours of the mis-judging multitude, with an inconsiderate facility yielded to these insidious suggestions; *first*, by suspending the law so far as to prohibit exportation except under very particular circumstances, and to permit importation, either without paying any duties at all, or under such small duties as to be wholly inadequate to the purposes for which they had been devised; and, *at last*, to make a permanent law, which was indeed *nominally* of the same nature with the former law, but which was *virtually* the same as a total abrogation of the law, as facts have since that time but too clearly proved.

This bold step was not, however, ventured upon all at once. The effects of the beneficial change that had resulted from the operation of the corn laws were not totally obliterated from the minds of many persons who were yet living; and many more had heard from their fathers such unequivocal eulogiums on that wise regulation of police, that it was still looked up to as a venerable fabric which it would be unsafe to alter: besides, nearly all the writers of foreign nations, particularly those of France, who treated subjects of this nature, had made such repeated and unanswerable comparisons between the effects that had resulted from this law in England, when compared with those of a system that was in principle directly the reverse, which had been acted upon in France for nearly an equal number of years (first introduced by Mr. Colbert), and which had checked the agriculture of that country, enhanced the prices of corn, destroyed their manufactures (for the professed encouragement of which these laws had been enacted), and introduced universal misery. The contrast between these two cases, I say, was so often held up to public view by the writers of that nation, and the facts on which they grounded their conclusions

clusions were so very striking, and so unequivocally established, that it was impossible for any man who was in the habit of reading at all, not to have met with something of that sort, and it was also impossible that it should not have made some impression on his mind. From these causes no one was found so bold as immediately to propose to abrogate the law, but many were found so weak as to give way to the clamour so as to consent to a *temporary* suspension of the act; and one temporary suspension of it paved the way to another, and another, and another, till at last the effects of these temporary suspensions began to be felt by an actual deficiency of the produce (a necessary and unavoidable consequence of the insecurity of the farmer) and a real enhancement of price; and at length, after twenty years struggle and fluctuation of counsels, during the greatest part of which time the country was deprived of the benefit of the law, the *permanent* law, as it was then called, of 1773 was enacted, from which period the original law of 1668 and 1700 was virtually, though not nominally, abrogated.

I do not enter into the particulars of these laws at the present time; though it is a discussion which I shall not decline when a proper occasion calls for it. All that I think it necessary here to do is, to state facts, in order to shew the surprising coincidence between the effects exhibited in the table and the alterations that have taken place in the corn laws; *viz.* that the law of 1688 was suspended in the year 1757, since which period it has never been suffered to operate freely; and that since the year 1773 it has been altered and virtually repealed (I do not forget the law of 1791). This, I say, is the fact; and I do not choose at the present time to embarrass it by collateral considerations. I only desire the reader to look at the table, and draw the obvious inferences. He must there observe, that after the year 1750
the

the amount of our exports began to decline; but, as the effects of laws of this sort cannot be instantly produced, the quantity of exports, though reduced, still continued to exceed the imports until the year 1770; after which period our average imports have exceeded our exports, and these have gone on, in a progression more regular than in a case of this sort could well be expected, till the present hour, when they amount to the amazing quantity of 3,938,829 quarters; to which if we add 1,667,140 quarters, (the balance of ^{ex} imports in the year 1750) it gives 5,605,969 quarters as a deficiency in the produce *minus* the consumption of this country, that has taken place between the years 1750 and 1800! No man will pretend to say, that this variation can have resulted either from the change of climate, or from the increase of the people (which last I shall consider more fully in future); nor is it, I think, possible for any candid mind, from this view of facts, to entertain a doubt that the change is to be attributed solely and entirely to the variations that have been made in the corn-laws, though the *amount* of the deficiency, as I have repeatedly stated, has doubtless been augmented by the agency of other causes co-operating with it.

It being thus clearly established, that the alarming change in the state of this country, which has been taken notice of by so many writers of late, *viz.* that of having become a great importing country, in order to supply the wants of our own people, instead of a great exporting country, as it was fifty years ago, is to be entirely attributed to the changes that have taken place in our corn laws; and that now, in fact, being brought back, from that cause, to the same sort of distress that our ancestors experienced before this century, we must not be surprised at experiencing an average rise and frequent fluctuation of price of this article, similar to what they did. In fact, the prices
which

which were, I may say unnaturally, reduced in consequence of the operation of that law so much below their usual standard, must now, since it has been suspended, as naturally revert to its former standard. In conformity with this conclusion, which reason so readily suggests, we find, that in fact, although we cannot be said as yet to have altogether reached the same standard, yet we are fast approaching it; for though I will not admit that 3*l.* 10*s.* per quarter, the average price of wheat for the last five years, is nearly so high as 3*l.* 11*s.* the average price of wheat during the four last years of the former century; yet as wheat at the moment in which I write (Dec. 10, 1800) is at the price of 5*l.* 19*s.* per quarter, and still advancing, there seems reason to think, that ere long we may be, in that respect, placed pretty nearly on a par with our forefathers a hundred years ago. Neither should we be much surprised at this; for similar causes ought always to produce like effects.

Having thus established, as I hope to the full conviction of the reader, by a fair display of undeniable facts, that a well regulated exportation bounty on corn, to a nation so circumstanced as this country is, has a necessary tendency, both to augment the production of corn, and to diminish its average price, it only remains for me to state a few facts, with a view to shew that it at the same time tends to prevent fluctuations in price. This, indeed, is such a natural consequence of the first, that few proofs will be here necessary, and I shall not long detain the reader by a numerous detail of facts for this purpose, that might be multiplied if necessary so as to fill a volume. The only one that it is of importance to ascertain is what was the highest and what the lowest price of wheat during the 50 years that this law continued to operate, and then to contrast these with the prices at any other equal period of time. By examining Mr. Dirom's tables I find, that
from

from the accession of George I. 1714 when the corn-law had begun to operate sensibly, to the year 1754, being a period of forty years—

	£.	s.	d.
The highest price occurred anno 1740	2	15	0
<i>Nor did it reach this height more than once during all that period.</i>			
The lowest occurred anno 1744.....	1	4	11
<i>Nor did that occur more than once.</i>			
Difference one 1-6th to one nearly	1	10	1

From the accession of Elizabeth, 1557, to her death, 1597, 40 years,

The highest price of wheat, viz. anno 1597,			
was	10	15	3
The lowest ditto, 1557	0	16	7
Difference, as twelve 1-half to one nearly...	9	18	8

Again,

Average of the five highest years of Elizabeth,			
ending with 1597	7	7	11
Ditto the five lowest years ending 1562.....	0	17	10½
Difference as eight 1-half to one nearly.....	6	10	0½

Average of the five highest years between 1714			
and 1754, ending 1729	2	7	6
Ditto the five lowest years ending 1746....	1	9	5
Difference as one-third to one nearly....	0	18	1

I shall only add farther on this head, that

anno 1557 the price of wheat before the			
harvest, was.....	6	12	3
After harvest.....	0	9	11

Difference in a few months as 13 to one nearly !	6	2	4
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Can

Can any person attempt to make an estimate of the evils that would result from such a sudden fluctuation of prices in the present day?—Yet who will say, that, were we to be reduced to the necessity of relying upon foreign nations for a principal part of our support, we might not soon be in such a situation? I do not say, that all the potentates in Europe have it in their power, at the present moment, to reduce us to that state; but let us only proceed a little farther in the same train that we have been in for twenty years past, and let any one then say what would be the effect of such a combination of the northern powers against us as threatens us at the present moment (December 1800). Is it wise in any nation voluntarily to put itself into such a situation? And what can prevent it, if our own farmers are not induced to raise corn sufficient for our support? And how can they be induced to do this so effectually as by the operation of an efficient bounty on exportation, and protecting duties on importation? When these questions are answered, I pledge myself, if I be living, to examine these answers, should they seem to deserve it*.

On the Practicability of raising Corn in Britain sufficient to support a much greater degree of Population than its present amount.

HAVING thus endeavoured to explain, from a simple developement of facts, the real circumstance which has effected

* It is with satisfaction that I remark the decided reprobation with which any hint at establishing a maximum price of corn is received in both houses of parliament. What could be the consequence, but an almost total, instead of a partial, abandonment of the culture of corn?—for who will

effected so remarkable a change in the productive powers of this country respecting corn, and has occasioned such a revolution in the corn-trade in consequence of that, some may think that the disquisition might here be closed. But though I have purposely and carefully avoided hitherto all manner of reasoning that might tend to throw facts out of sight, and thus perhaps in some degree tend to embarrass the question;—yet, being aware that there are many persons who have accustomed themselves to account for every fact which they admit as a truth, I consider the question now under discussion to be of so much importance in the present state of this country, that, rather than have a chance of losing the assent of any one person, I would willingly accommodate myself to their manner of investigating questions of this sort, if I could. With that view, I shall endeavour to give them some idea of the *manner* in which the facts already exhibited respecting the augmentation and diminution of the produce of this country, may naturally be accounted for, under different circumstances, that thus the question may be freed of every sort of mysterious appearance. In this task I the more willingly engage, because I easily foresee that in the prosecution of it I shall have occasion to remove those doubts which seem so strongly to have taken possession of the minds of many persons of great respectability in this country, concerning the *practicability* of raising abundance of food in this island to support our present population; as I hope to be able clearly to evince that it

pretend to say, that any law can compel any man to raise corn and sell it below what it cost himself? In this respect the prompt and general decision is just. But while they thus decide with accurate justice on the *extremity* of the case, do they decide with equal justice with regard to those intermediate steps that are of a similar tendency with the regulation they here condemn? This is a question I wish the reader to keep in his mind till I shall find an opportunity to recur to it more particularly.

could

could support, without foreign aid, a population greatly beyond any thing, that there is the smallest probability it can ever be made to attain. If I shall be fortunate enough to succeed in this attempt, I shall feel a satisfaction in thinking that I shall thus minister directly to the comfort of the persons who now labour under this impression; and in a more indirect, though not less effectual manner to the well-being of many yet unborn, who may benefit by the measures that the removal of this (shall I say unfortunate) prejudice, will naturally render eligible.

In this part of my disquisition, I conceive that I am entitled to avail myself of that kind of technical knowledge that has resulted from those practical agricultural pursuits in which I have been engaged, as a business, from my infancy; and which enables me to feel the force of certain circumstances, that could not so strongly have operated on the mind of those who have not had opportunities of receiving information of the same kind: and if I request that a final judgment on any one position may not be adopted, until all the facts and circumstances that tend to affect it shall be developed, it will not, I hope, be deemed unreasonable; for there can be no doubt, that many positions appear, when first enounced, to be extremely improbable, which, nevertheless, may be fully established by the most undeniable demonstration.

I beg leave then to state, as a truth, which I hope to prove to the conviction of the reader, That, in a country situated as this is, every inch of soil, which is not naturally in a state of uncommon fertility, is capable of being rendered, by human industry, more productive still; and that, under a judicious system of management, that productiveness may be made to augment, from year to year, for a succession of time to which no limits can be assigned, till at last it may be made to

attain a degree of productiveness, of which we cannot, perhaps, at this time conceive an idea. In this manner, land, that was originally so infertile as to require perhaps the produce of a thousand acres to sustain one person, may be made to pass, by an infinity of gradations, till it shall come, after the lapse of many ages, to be able to afford sufficient sustenance, perhaps, for two, four, six, possibly ten, or more, persons to each acre. Observe, I do not assert what is the *maximum* possible produce, for I have never seen any field that is nearly at that state of productiveness. nor, if even such a field were found, could the question be now solved; for no one can set bounds to the discoveries of man, nor to the capabilities of nature when assisted by art. Before the potatoe was discovered in Europe, we knew no plant then cultivated that could be made to produce perhaps one-tenth part of human sustenance from the same extent of land as can be yielded by that valuable esculent, under a judicious system of management*; nor are

* Of the quantity of human sustenance that can be obtained from ground under potatoes few persons have, at the present hour, any adequate notion; or of the difference in this respect between that and other crops. To give some notion of this, I shall beg leave to state, that, in an ingenious investigation for this purpose, prosecuted by Mr. Mackie (Dirom on the Corn-Laws, p. 244), he found, from a number of trials, that on an average, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of potatoes were sufficient, when boiled, for one meal for a healthy person; of course, four pounds for three meals, or the food of one day. As to the produce of an acre of potatoes, its *maximum* has never been ascertained; but I may state, that I myself have taken up, at one time, at the rate of thirty tons per acre. But thirty tons being 62,200 pounds, and they divided by 4 gives 16,800 days' food for one person; this divided by 365 gives 46, the number of persons that may be sustained by the produce of one acre under potatoes for one year. This may be considered nearly as the maximum produce of potatoes, in the present state of our knowledge; though I am far from thinking that it is perhaps *one-half* of what it may be made to attain, under a continued attention to this article: and there is scarcely an acre of land in the island that may not be brought to afford this produce.

The same investigator has ascertained, with equal accuracy, the quantity of human

are we, perhaps, at this moment, able to obtain from it nearly one-half of the produce that it could be made to yield: neither is it beyond the bounds of possibility, that some other plant may yet be discovered even more nutritive and more productive than the potatoe. I only just hint at these things, to shew that no definite bounds can be at present assigned to the possible degree of population that this island could be brought to sustain; but, it may be with certainty said, that the present population is such a trifle compared to that, as to be much below any degree of serious consideration.

To the general tenor of this proposition, I am aware that many persons will scruple to assent. In Scotland, no farmer will be found who will not readily agree that every unproductive soil may be rendered more fertile; and be made to augment in fertility, from year to year, as long as his lease permits him to manage it properly; for scarcely any farmer there ever takes a farm but under the firm conviction of this truth. Under the influence of that conviction, many thousands of acres, in my time, have been, by their exertions, made to pass from a state of the most unproductive heath to that of fertile fields, that produce abundant crops of grass and corn, and are in a continual progress of melioration, where particular cir-

human sustenance that can be obtained from one acre of good grass-land; which was that it would support one individual 74 days and a half; that is about one-fifth part of a year. Thus may the same extent of land, under a particular crop, when cultivated, afford as much of human sustenance as 230 acres in grass could be made to yield!!! I do not mean here to enter into a detailed comparative statement of the proportion of human sustenance that could be afforded, by the same extent of land under different crops; far less do I mean to insinuate, that our land should be wholly converted into the production of any one crop; but, it is proper to state, that a crop of any kind of grain that can be cultivated in this country, affords a *much larger* portion of human sustenance than the same land could afford while in grass. This is another object for the mind of the reader to ruminate upon, while he attempts to make an estimate of the possible population that this country can sustain.

cumstances

circumstances do not prevent it. In *England*, indeed, few farmers, from peculiar circumstances affecting them, have been accustomed to consider their land under the same point of view; but there are many enlightened men among them who will readily recognize its truth: at any rate, what is true in one part of the island respecting a thing of this nature cannot but be true in another; even although its truth, from local circumstances, should not be there so generally recognized. But, there are few persons, even in *England*, that have ever been in the country at all, who cannot bring to their recollection fields, or particular patches, that have been rendered by art more productive than before, and which are still susceptible of being improved to a higher degree. If this can be done in one case, why not in another*. Observe,

* I am almost ashamed to adduce authorities in support of a proposition that will, to many, appear to be so self-evident as to be deemed the next thing to an axiom that ought to be assented to as soon as it is enounced; but it is incumbent on man to endeavour to adapt himself on all occasions to the circumstances in which he feels himself placed; and to act accordingly. From this consideration I beg leave to make a short extract from a French translation of a very spirited Italian work on Agriculture (not having been able to meet with the original) written by *Camillo Tarello de Leonato*, and first published in Mantua, anno 1577, which is exactly to the point.—After enumerating many other circumstances in favour of a new mode of culture, that he proposes to introduce, he proceeds to state as a last recommendation to it, “*Que les terrains maigres et stériles, deviennent par là peu à peu bons et fertiles: car telle est la constitution de la terre, que, par le labourage et les engrais elle change de nature et devient toujours meilleure, comme nous voyons clairement par l’expérience. Valerius maximus nous en raconte un exemple frappant du roy de numide Masinissa, qui fit tellement fluerir l’agriculture, qu’il laissa son pays, qu’il avoit trouvé stérile et désolé, plein de tout bien et de toute abondance. Il est en nôtre puissance d’en faire de même de nôtre pays. Par contre, il n’est pas moins vrai que quand même la terre est bonne et grasse, elle ne portera de fruits si elle n’est pas bien cultivée, telle que la capacité de l’esprit, qui ne se developpe que par l’étude et l’exercice, suivant la belle comparaison de Cicéron. Nam ut ager quamvis fertilis, sine cultura fructuosus esse non potest; sic sine doctrina animus, Cic. Tusc. 2.*” Cicero was a man of letters, and by
no

serve, it is the physical *possibility* alone that I here speak of; as to the moral *practicability*, that is a different question.—Innumerable are the moral obstructions that may unnerve the hand of industry; but it is certainly *possible* to remove moral obstructions, if there be exertions used adapted to the circumstances of the case.

But I beg leave to adduce a stronger practical instance than any that I know of in Britain (if the improvements about Aberdeen be excepted) illustrative of the truth of this proposition. There is a large district called the Campine in Brabant, which consists of the most infertile soil that hath as yet been discovered in Europe. It has hitherto frustrated every attempt but one, that has been made to augment its productiveness; though to that effort it has been forced to yield. Some religious houses, thinly scattered over these wastes, have been there established; and wherever these establishments have been made, fields, in the course of time, though by a process extremely slow, have been rendered moderately productive around them, which are found to increase in fertility from age to age, and extend their boundaries from year to year. Indeed the same thing may be remarked in this and every other kingdom in Europe; for wherever religious orders placed themselves, the land around such habitations, in consequence of continued culture for a long period, has become fertile beyond the usual state of the country around. The fact is universally recognised, but is in general believed rather to have been a *cause* than a *consequence* of such settlements*. So that there is no room to doubt, that productiveness

no means addicted to agriculture more than every man of sober mind in his own time; yet so familiar was this idea to him, that he recurs to it as to a maxim so universally admitted, as to serve as an apt illustration, by way of simile, of an object he wished to exhibit under a striking point of view. It would appear that the studies of men of patrician rank in ancient, were directed to very different objects from those of modern times.

* In a very intelligent memoir on the agriculture of the Netherlands, by Abbé Mann, published in the first volume of the Communications to

ductiveness will continue to augment as long as circumstances shall permit the present establishments to be continued. Even the rich land of Flanders, which is scarcely equalled in fertility by any land in Europe, the produce of one acre of which may in the present day be perhaps equal to fifty in England, taking the average of the whole kingdom, derives that extraordinary fertility from nothing else than a continued and uninterrupted cultivation, according to the Abbe Mann; who, after having described the progress of melioration of the barren sands of the Campine, concludes with these emphatic words: "I may add here, from the undoubted testimony of the

the Board of Agriculture, he gives the following account of the Campine district, p. 225. "It is well known that the Campine of Brabant, which is the northernmost part of that province, consisted originally of sand covered with heath, interspersed with lakes and extensive marshes, and here and there with woods of fir. Tradition supposes it to have been once a part of the sea. To this day, where cultivation has not extended, the soil of itself produces nothing but heath and fir. The sand is of the most barren and harsh kind; nor can it be rendered fertile but by continual manuring. As the property of this ground may be acquired for a trifle, many have been the attempts of private persons to bring tracts of it into cultivation; every means have been tried for that purpose, and government has given every possible encouragement to it. But I have not yet heard of any one, however considerable might be his fortune, that has succeeded in it; and many have been ruined by the project. What is cultivated in the Campine, is owing to the religious houses established in it, especially the two great abbeys of Tongerlo and Everbode. Their uninterrupted duration for five or six hundred years past, and their indefatigable industry, have conquered these barren sands, and rendered many parts of them *highly productive*. The method they follow is simple and uniform; they never undertake to cultivate more of this barren soil at a time than they have sufficient manure for; seldom more than five or six bunders (about 15 or 18 acres) in a year; and when it is brought by labour and manuring into a state capable of producing sufficient for a family to live on, it is let out to farmers on easy terms, after having built them comfortable habitations. By these means many extensive tracts of the Campine are *well cultivated, and covered with villages, well built houses, and churches*. The abbey of Tongerlo alone furnishes about *seventy* of its members as curates to these parishes, *all of whom owe their existence to that original stock*." I feel great pleasure in being able to corroborate my own experience by such respectable authority.

historians

A TABLE, shewing the Average London Prices of Wheat, per Quarter, from the Year 1650 to 1800, inclusive; as also the Quantities of Corn imported into, or exported from, GREAT BRITAIN, from the Year 1696, when the Account of Imports and Exports began to be kept, till 1800, inclusive; and the Balance of Exports and Imports : being the Averages of the different Periods marked in the Margin *.

Average of Years.	A. D.	Average Imports. Quarters.	Average Exports. Quarters.	Exces of Exports. Quarters.	Exces of Imports. Quarters.	Average Price of Wheat per Quarter †.	Average Price of Wheat, 40 Years each.
5 Years, ending at -	1650	- - -	During this period	A duty on	No bounty.	£. s. d.	Average of 40 years before the bounty commenced. } £. 2 14 9
10 Years - - - -	1660	- - -	no accounts of	Exportation.	- - -	5 16 2	
10 Years - - - -	1670	- - -	imports or ex-	- - -	- - -	2 19 5	
10 Years - - - -	1680	- - -	ports can be	- - -	- - -	2 18 8	
10 Years - - - -	1690	- - -	obtained.	- - -	- - -	2 14 0	
By itself - -	1700	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	2 6 11	Average of 40 years during the full influence of the bounty. } £. 1 16 2
4 Years only - - -	1700	2,237	82,807	80,570	Bounty commenced.	3 8 3	
10 Years - - - -	1710	442	284,945	284,503	- - -	2 18 1	
10 Years - - - -	1720	71	449,193	449,122	- - -	2 11 10	
10 Years - - - -	1730	73,269	447,968	374,699	- - -	1 17 0	
10 Years - - - -	1740	8,553	549,447	540,894	- - -	1 16 6	
10 Years - - - -	1750	15,943	848,660	832,717	- - -	1 17 6	
By itself - -	1750	319	1,667,459	1,667,140	{ Year of greatest Exports. }	1 13 8	
10 Years - - - -	1760	37,397	582,837	545,440	- - -	1 12 6	
5 Years - - - -	1765	122,943	696,518	573,575	{ Bounty suspen- ded, or wholly annulled. }	2 2 6	Average of 40 Years after the bounty was annulled. } £. 2 9 5
5 Years - - - -	1770	408,522	161,516	- - -	247,006	2 2 1 $\frac{3}{4}$	
5 Years - - - -	1775	593,641	88,886	- - -	504,755	2 13 1 $\frac{1}{4}$	
5 Years - - - -	1780	437,632	410,372	- - -	27,260	2 9 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	
5 Years - - - -	1785	531,138	263,716	- - -	267,422	1 18 7	
5 Years - - - -	1790	808,963	397,144	- - -	411,819	2 7 2	
5 Years - - - -	1795	1,381,504	197,590	- - -	1,183,914	2 5 6	
5 Years - - - -	1800	2,356,249	217,888	- - -	2,138,357	2 12 6	
By itself - -	1800	3,259,605	321,776	{ Year of greatest Imports. }	2,938,829†	3 6 6	
						5 10 0	

* This statement, preceding the year 1785, is taken from the tables published by Mr. Dirom, in his Treatise on the Corn-Trade: from 1785, downwards, from the tables in Lord Sheffield's pamphlet, just published. During this period, the consumption of rice having become considerable, it is included alike in the imports and exports.

† The table of Prices is also taken from Mr. Dirom, at the rate of the *estimated* value of the specie at each period respectively. In this estimate he takes into the account, not only the variations in the weight of the corn, which he brings to the present standard, but also supposes that corn is of a value, greater or smaller, proportioned to the legal rate of interest at the time. This, it must be acknowledged, is a very inaccurate approximation to equalize the value; as it renders that of old times much lower than it ought to be.

‡ The imports of this year are not made up from actual accounts, as I had no facts but those afforded by Lord Sheffield's pamphlet, which only give the importation of *wheat* from the 4th of January to the 10th of October. To make up the remaining time, I have supposed the importation of that article during this latter period, would bear the same relation to the importation during the former period of the year, as the importation for the same time last year did to the former part of that year. This, I am satisfied, will make the account to be rather under the truth than otherwise. I have also supposed that the importation of other kinds of grain bears the same proportion to that of wheat as in ordinary years. A little time will show if these assumptions have been just; the errors, if any, cannot be considerable. There can be no doubt but the next year's importation, including rice, will greatly exceed it.

historians of the Low Countries, that the cultivation of the greater part of these *rich* provinces took its rise from the self-same means, eight hundred or a thousand years back, when they were in a manner one continued forest.”

P. 226. Man, in short, in every situation where he has soil to work upon, if he is not wanting to himself, but turns his attention to the cultivation of that soil, must render it more productive than it ever could have been without him. Wherever population increases, therefore, the produce of the country must be augmented along with it, *unless some moral influence is permitted to derange the economy of nature.*

The natural conclusion then from this undeniable fact is, that no legislator need ever be afraid, in a country which is not destitute of soil, that an augmentation of the population will decrease the means of subsistence for the people, unless it shall be his desire that it should be so, by favouring such arrangements as shall prevent it from being the interest of individuals to attend to the cultivation of the soil in a proper manner.

The reader, if he adverts to the above circumstances, will be able easily to perceive how a variation in the law may have effected that change in the course of the corn-trade, which is so clearly exhibited in the Table; for, if he believes, that the bounty on exportation, and counter-vailing duties on importation, have a necessary tendency to ensure against the danger of a destructive depression of price, and a ready sale for grain, in a year of great abundance, and to protect him against an unreasonable depression of price in years of scarcity, from the introduction of foreign grain, he will easily see, that the farmer can go on with alacrity in his attempts at augmenting the amount of his produce at all times; and from the profits

that he thus derives (for under such a regulation the farmer will in general derive more profit from an abundant crop than from one that is greatly deficient), he will be enabled to bear his proportion in the common calamity during an unpropitious season, by contenting himself then with a price somewhat under prime cost; and as, by these his uninterrupted exertions, he comes from year to year to be able to raise more corn with the same labour, it in truth costs himself less than before; so that he is able to afford it to the consumer, after a continuance of years under this system, at a lower average price than formerly. In this way it is easy to account for the phenomena exhibited on the first part of the Table, in which the quantity of surplus produce is continually on the increase, while the actual selling price is on the decline.

Nor will it be more difficult to account for those appearances which are exhibited in the second part of the Table. It is natural for men whose well-being is at stake, to become extremely apprehensive of any thing that has a tendency to render their property insecure; and whatever deprives them of confidence in this respect, sets them instantly to the devising of means by which they may the most effectually secure that property. During the first fifty years after the corn law was enacted, that law was enforced with such a degree of general steadiness, as at length to convince the farmers that it would be always respected; and after some years experience of its salutary effects, it began to inspire among them that degree of confidence which alone can ever induce steady exertions in a business in which are much capital to be employed, expensive buildings erected, and intricate arrangements adjusted, which can only afford a proper return to the undertaker, after the lapse of

many years. No sooner then did parliament begin to tamper with these laws, and rashly to suspend their operation, by every popular clamour, for the most part raised by injudicious individuals, and fomented by those who have an *interest* in promoting them, than the farmer began to lose his confidence in the influence of this *pal-ladium* of the state (as it ought to have been deemed), and to consider how he could best secure himself against the danger that threatened him. While his mind was under these impressions, the first year of ordinary abundance, in which the prices fell so as to be inadequate to his reimbursement, in consequence of the concurrence in the market of foreign corn (sold there, perhaps, at a loss, for that purpose), disgusted him with the business of rearing corn, and set him to try if he could not discover some other more profitable method of applying his ground. Under these circumstances, it would not be long before some one among them would discover, that fields in grass paid better, and could be managed with much less trouble, and at much less expense, than while in corn; he therefore appropriates a part of his corn-fields to that purpose; his neighbours observe that he grows more easy in all respects, and more affluent. The example becomes contagious; servants, in consequence of tempting wages from manufacturers, had become more expensive, and more troublesome to manage. By converting his land into grass, the farmer is enabled to dismiss many of these, and thus free himself from much trouble and expense. In grazing-land, he has occasion not only for fewer horses and servants than for managing it while in corn, but fewer houses also; these are therefore taken down, to save the expense of repairs: and under this change of circumstances, he feels himself more easy as well as more

wealthy than before. All these changes, therefore, go on in the most silent manner imaginable, and without occasioning the smallest appearance of discontent : and although the farmer knows well, that in consequence of this change, his ground, under this system of management, cannot sustain half the number of people that it formerly did, that is no concern of his ; he has only to look after his own concerns, as every other private individual in the state ought to do. If he feels himself thrown into embarrassing circumstances by the negligence of those whose duty it is to shield him against them, it is but fair and just that he should avail himself of all legal means within his power to free himself from those embarrassments.

Such are the circumstances which have naturally occasioned an increasing deficiency of produce compared to the consumption of this country ; circumstances that have operated precisely after the same manner, though more slowly, and in a much less degree than the *maximum* (by some recommended) would do ; and the high prices which have excited so much *astonishment* and alarm at the present time, are the clear and inevitable consequences. I have already said, that they could be in no respect astonishing to me, because, from the above explanation, it will appear, that these are such natural and necessary consequences of the alteration which produced them, that I, more than twenty years ago, foresaw and pointed them out as unavoidable ; nor was I singular in this, for every sensible person who adverted to the subject, and who was equally acquainted with the business of a farmer, saw it as well as I did ; several of them also exerted themselves to the utmost of their power, to avert the impending evil. Mr. Dirom, whom I have so often had occasion to mention with respect in this work, contemplating this subject, expresses himself thus :

“ In

“ In many other countries, where the soil and climate are more favourable, the productions of the earth more easily reared, but government despotic, it is with indifference that the inhabitants, in general, cultivate the lands, and even see the convulsions of the state; they have no share in the government, and a change of masters does not alter their condition: but in Great Britain, where more industry may be necessary, labour is sweetened by freedom, *and nothing but improper laws will check the spirit of the people.*

“ While the ancient laws laid the country open to the importation of foreign grain by injudicious duties, or restrictions upon our own produce, our farmers were dispirited: a great part of the soil lay without culture; the price of grain was consequently high, and population was restrained.

“ When the restrictions were not only removed, but bounties given upon our excrescent stock, by the acts of 1688 and 1700, the happiest effects were immediately experienced: these laws acted like magic; our agriculture immediately rose, as if from the dead; population increased; and, instead of eating the bread of foreign nations, we not only maintained all our own people *at a lower rate than was ever known before*, and considerably lower than at present (1786), [very much lower than at present (1800),] but the kingdom received an immediate addition of riches and strength from the money brought in, from the increase of shipping, and from the people employed in raising and exporting the surplus of our produce: a state of prosperity which continued without interruption for above half a century after the Union.

“ No sooner was importation again encouraged, than our agriculture languished; our exportation declined; the

the prices again rose ; and we have the mortification to receive, *and possibly now to need*, an immense importation of foreign grain every year."

Who could express himself more justly that should write at the present day ?

It is natural enough for those who take only a slight view of this question to think, that, as the price of corn is now high, it ought to operate as a bounty to the farmer, and make him rear corn once more in greater quantities than before, and thus bring back abundance as formerly. It is proper that I should show why this cannot be expected to produce any material alteration of circumstances ; for, though there can be no doubt but it operates in a small degree to produce an inconsiderable and momentary supply, yet it has a tendency rather to diminish than to augment the quantity of corn produced upon the whole.

The difficulty has, to an attentive observer, been already solved. The business of agriculture is of too complicated a nature, and too unwieldy in all its parts, to admit of any material change being effected by mere *temporary* incitements. One that has dismissed his servants, who, in consequence of that, have entered into the army or navy, or gone no one knows whither, cannot bring them back when he calls for them ; and would find no small difficulty in obtaining others to supply their places, especially if such a call should be pretty general over all the country. If the houses required for lodging these persons, and carrying on the business of aration, have been taken down, or allowed to go out of repair, a man of common sense would not, with a view to supply a precarious and temporary demand, undertake to lay out so much money as would be required to put them in order :

order: his horses have been sold, his implements of husbandry dispersed, and the money that was vested in these has been applied to other purposes. It would require no small exertion to collect that money, and replace things in their former state; so that the inducement must be very strong indeed, and the prospect of success much more certain than any thing of the fluctuating nature here supposed ever can be, to make him even think of it: besides, we ought never to forget, that if the price of corn has risen, the produce of grass-land has risen also; so that the difference to him would be nothing near so great as it appears to be on the first view of the subject. Add to all this, that the grazing farmer has found himself freed of so many cares that used to oppress him as a corn farmer, and has become so much accustomed to a life of comparative indolence, that scarcely any temptation short of absolute compulsion, could induce him ever to return to the laborious business that he has quitted. It is unnecessary to detail other considerations that deter him from making the change; these may suffice to show, that nothing short of *permanent* and *strong* inducements can ever prevail on such a person to think of resuming the plough. Had these considerations been adverted to by our legislators, it ought to have moderated the desire of innovation which seems to have too powerfully operated upon their minds; because they must have seen, that, though evil might thus be produced, it would be a matter of great difficulty to restore things to their former state.

But as our legislators, and men of rank, from the sphere in which they move, could not have equal opportunities with such humble individuals as myself, to become acquainted with the circumstances developed in the latter part
of

of this memoir, and of course might naturally overlook the facts that I have stated in their corroboration; we must, therefore, admit, that less blame ought to be imputed to them on that account than might appear justly due at first sight by persons possessing the same means of information with myself: yet it will be more difficult to vindicate them from culpable negligence in having paid no attention to the facts that I am about to state; for it is scarcely possible to suppose, that they must not frequently have been presented to men of liberal education under various points of view, in the course of their reading.

It ought ever to be understood, that there are *duties* imposed on every person who obtains a right of admission, and takes a seat in either of the legislative assemblies of the nation, from the performance of which he cannot, without just imputation of blame, exempt himself; and the first of these duties is, that he should endeavour so to inform his mind, as that he may be able in some measure to judge of the propriety of giving his assent, or withholding it, on every great question in which the welfare of the people or the existence of the state are materially involved; and few objects of discussion, as obviously appears by the present state of things, more seriously affect those deep interests than the present.

No writers have been more in vogue among men of fashion in this country for half a century past, than those of France; and the question respecting the commerce of grain has been often discussed among them. One of the most popular writers of this class (Mirabeau the elder), talking on this subject, after a warm eulogium on Sully for the judicious regulations that he adopted for encouraging exports of grain from France, proceeds thus: "La

France,

France, au moyen de cette liberté, aidée de l'autorité d'un grand roi, et des soins œconomiques d'un grand ministre, devînt presque aussitôt le grenier de l'Europe. Les ANGLOIS se plaignoient en 1621 de ce que les François leur fournissoient un si grande quantité de bled, et à si bas prix qu'ils ne pouvoient soutenir dans leurs marchés la concurrence de leurs propres bleds auprès de ceux de leur voisins. Ce bas prix cependant, ainsi qu'on le voit par les tarifs de ce tems là, étoit le tiers du marc d'argent ; *mais les Anglois moins habiles agriculteurs, alors que les François, et moins versés dans l'economie et l'intelligence rustique, ne savoient recueillir qu'en dépensant beaucoup.*"

He then goes on thus to illustrate the direful effect of a spirit of legislation the reverse of it :

“ L'agriculture se soutint dans ce bon état en France, à l'aide de la liberté du commerce extérieur des grains, jusques aux tems malheureux de la guerre civile sous la minorité de Louis XIV. Ensuite comença le système aveugle qui a fait de si terribles progrès depuis, et dont l'absurdité est tellement ancrée dans les têtes, qu'elle force aujourd'hui même les ministres les plus éclairés à tatonner le rétablissement des droits de nature à cet égard. Mr. Colbert, pour favoriser son plan d'établissement des manufactures le luxe, crut devoir procurer à bon marché la subsistance des ouvriers par l'aprovvisionnement prémédité des villes et lieux de forte consommation chez l'étranger, comme aussi par des commencemens de défense de l'exportation des grains *sous le prétexte précieux de prévenir les disettes*, prétexte toujours accueilli par les bas peuple, qui ne penetrent pas jusqu'à qu'el point ces prétendues précautions lui sont funestes. Mr. Colbert néanmoins, en arretant les commerce essentiel de la nation, sacrifia les

revenus du sol à la chimère des manufactures.

Les impôts surchargeoient les biens, les champs tomboient à friche dans plusieurs provinces du royaume, les disettes devinrent fréquentes et presque periodiques, &c."

—*Mem. Soc. of Berne*, 1760, p. 271.

One would think, with such an example before their eyes, which has been displayed with a still greater degree of energy by many other authors, it would have been scarcely possible for our legislators to have fallen into the error here so severely and so justly reprehended: yet true it is, that the law of 1773 was constructed precisely upon the same principle with that of Colbert, and with the same *avowed* intention of lowering the price of corn to our manufacturers, by encouraging the importation of corn from abroad, for the purpose of feeding our own people at a cheaper rate. But though the strong lesson which the fate of France might have afforded was disregarded, it is to be hoped that the much stronger lesson inculcated by our own fate at present (exactly of the same kind, and resulting from the same cause) will not be suffered to pass over without effect. I once more repeat, that I do not overlook the law of 1791; but this is not yet the time to examine it.

Another French writer, in the same work, contemplating the same law, says: "C'est aux Anglois, que nous devons les premiers progrès de la bonne agriculture. Les disettes autrefois si fréquentes en Angleterre montrèrent à ce peuple marchand et guerrier, qui pour exécuter ses grands desseins de commerce, il faillait se procurer une subsistance *indépendante de ses voisins*. Après la longue guerre civile entre l'infortuné Charles I. et son parlement, l'Angleterre se trouvant épuisée, on travailla avec ardeur à réparer ces pertes par un commerce, et
pour

pour parvenir à ce commerce, on le fonda sur un bonne culture des terres. Le gouvernement établit une police extrêmement favorable au cultivateur. C'est depuis cette époque qu'on peut dater la grandeur, la richesse, et la puissance d'Angleterre. L'Angleterre peut employer ainsi un infinité de bras dans les arts, dans les manufactures, dans les armées, dans la marine; sans craindre de manquer de nécessaire. Cette crainte, à ce que prétend un écrivain moderne, arête depuis un siècle la France au milieu de ses conquêtes. *Une disette actuelle ou prochaine la force à faire la paix.* On fait la quantité immense de bled, que les Anglois fournissent depuis quelques années à quelques provinces de France; la paix uniquement garantit cette ressource. Les disettes affoiblissent et depouplent l'Espagne, et ces disettes sont produites par le decouragement du cultivateur, et par la triste état de l'agriculture négligée."—*Ibid. p. 12.*

What a lesson is here held up to us in the present day !

Another writer, in the same volume (p. 48), discussing the same subject, thus expresses himself : after showing the benefits that would result from an unlimited permission to export corn, he adds, " On est allé plus loin en Angleterre en suivant ces principes. Cette nation intelligente ne s'est pas contentée de permettre la sortie illimitée de ses bleds ; elle accorde encore pour encourager le laboureur, une gratification à ceux qui exportent le bled, quand il est au dessous d'un certain prix. On sçait les debates que la question sur l'utilité de la gratification occasionna dans le parlement [this was written in the year 1760], *des gens intéressés* la crurent à charge à la nation, et contraire au progrès des manufactures. C'est

à l'expérience à décider. Depuis ce bénéfice l'Angleterre n'a plus essuyé de disette, le prix moyen du bled est plus bas qu'auparavant, et l'agriculture plus florissante."

If this sensible writer, who saw only one side of our state of facts, found no difficulty in deciding from that alone, how much more strongly would his decision be confirmed did he see the other side of the account, which speaks still more powerfully than the former !

Another writer to the same effect expresses himself thus :

"On ne sauroit trop répéter (dit l'auteur de l'éloge de M. de Sully), que l'abondance fut l'heureux effet de la liberté des grains ; par là, du tems de SULLY, la France devint le grenier de l'Europe ; elle jouit de cet avantage sous les règnes de Henri IV, de Louis XIII, et dans les premiers tems de Louis XIV, et l'on assure que la riche produit des graines, qui alors étoient à un prix aussi haut est diminué aujourd'hui des $\frac{5}{6}$. La raison qu'on en rend, est qu'en 1661 M. Colbert pour favoriser les manufactures, fit défendre l'exportation des graines pour que la subsistance des ouvriers étant à bas prix, la fabrication & la main d'œuvre se trouvassent moins chères que chez l'étranger. Le prix des grains qui avoit été souvent à 25 l. tomba à 7, 8, 9 ou 10 livres. Bientôt la culture diminua. Dans les mauvaises années la valeur des productions n'égalait pas la dépense. On prit donc le parti de les abandonner ; peu à peu les campagnes ont dépéri ; & la France qui produisoit 70 millions de septiers de bleds en produit à peine 40 millions aujourd'hui.

" L'Angleterre qui jusqu'au milieu du siècle passé recevoit dans ses portes & sur ses marchés une quantité très considérable de bleds de France, changea bien de face,
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desqu'elle eut converti des communes incultes & des pâturages arides en champs fertiles ou en prairies ; mais surtout depuis qu'en l'année 1689, époque des riches moissons d'Angleterre, le prix de l'exportation des grains fût institué à raison de 5 schellings par quartier de froment, jusqu'à 2 schellings 6 deniers pour le gruau d'avoine, payable quand l'exportation est faite par un vaisseau Anglois, dont l'équipage est les deux tiers national. Il est inconcevable de quelle prospérité cette sage & hardi délibération a été la source. Malgré les craintes qu'eurent alors les manufacturiers & les commerçans, du rencherissement des grains sur les marchés, qui devoit entraîner celui de la main d'œuvre ; il a été prouvé que dans le cours de 64 années qui s'étoient écoulées depuis 1689 à 1752 le prix de froment avoit diminué de 8 sche. 2 den. per quartier, ce qui ne peut être attribué qu'à l'accroissement de la culture, animée & encouragée par la gratification, outre tandis qu'elle coûtoit de 2 à 300 milles livres sterlings annuellement, ce sacrifice valoit à l'Angleterre, 1,550,000*l.* sterlings, dans le même terme. . . . Cette culture augmentée, aiant accru d'ailleurs son bétail, ses engrais, sa population, sa marine & les richesses de son commerce. Ce parallèle de l'état de la France abimé par la défense d'exportation, avec celui de l'Angleterre, *qui date sa grandeur du jour qu'elle y attachat un prix*, semble décider en faveur de la liberté & de ce commerce des grains & y conduire la législation."—1765. Part. ii. page 23.

I might go on this way, quoting the judgment that sensible men in other nations have formed of the tendency of this law, till I should fill a volume ; but I shall spare my reader, as well as myself, the unpleasant trouble of transcribing, and shall only add, that, however much
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these writers may differ in other respects, they all perfectly concur in the same judgment relating to this particular: *and none of these have an interest to disguise the truth.*

HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ABOVE POSITION.

As my sole object in writing this dissertation is, to impress the minds of readers of every denomination, with a conviction of the reality of certain truths, which I myself am deeply sensible would be of much importance to the well-being of mankind, if the conviction of them were so general as to be acted upon as established principles with steadiness and effect; I wish to employ such a diversity of illustrations as may seem best calculated to operate upon the perceptions of men who are under the influence of those multitudinous prejudices which prevail among us at the present day. No one of these prejudices appears to me to be of more pernicious tendency, than that which supposes that an increased population must naturally tend to produce a scarcity of provisions in every country; because it occasions a despondency of mind that slackens the energy of industrious exertions, and directs the attention towards the attainment of objects which, if obtained, must of necessity augment the very evil that they were intended to remove, while they discourage those very exertions which are alone calculated effectually to obviate the difficulty. I have already given such illustrations as will completely satisfy one class of readers on this head; but there are many others upon whose minds these illustrations will make but a faint impression, and which, I fear, con-

stitute the majority of the people ; among these there are some who are highly distinguished for talents, on whose mind the preceding observations will not operate a *full* conviction, because they have had no opportunity of forming a decisive judgment from their own knowledge of the certainty of the facts on which they rest. I shall therefore hope, that, under these circumstances, no other apology will be deemed necessary for my recurring again to the same subject, with a view to establish the truth of the important position assumed in p. 35, by an appeal to facts, the truth of which will be readily recognised by many of those who could not be affected by the others.

The position itself I will also repeat, with a trifling variation of terms ; it is, *that an increase of population in any state whose fields have not yet been made to attain their highest possible degree of productiveness* (a thing that, probably, has never yet been seen on this globe), *will necessarily have its means of subsistence rather augmented than diminished by that augmentation of its population : and the reverse.* This position I shall now endeavour to illustrate by a reference to historical records that are well known to every person who has had a liberal education.

Many are the countries on the globe that have at one time had a population much more numerous than at another period ; and I do not know a single instance, where the nation was so circumstanced as not to admit of receiving supplies from without, in which the people did not experience a greater abundance during the period of its greatest population than when the people were less numerous. I shall be obliged to any of my readers who can inform me of an instance that runs counter to this position ;

position; for hitherto all my researches to that end have proved ineffectual.

I will not carry back the reader to the kingdoms of Nineveh and Babylon, and the other Asiatic empires; for although the population of these kingdoms, while in their glory, was immense, and abundance there universal, where poverty and paucity of people now alike prevail, yet we know too little both of their ancient and their present condition to be able to state facts so clearly as to render them decisive: it is plain, however, that they tend to support the position.

Greece, before she degenerated into a nest of hornets, perpetually at war at home and abroad, was a populous and agricultural country; and derived abundance of food for all her people from the produce of her own fields. Though Greece be not half the size of England, its population at that time amounted, according to the best accounts, to 14 millions*; yet the soil of many of the principal states of Greece is very poor, and it is now occupied by, perhaps, less than one tenth part of the former inhabitants; and these few do not now find it an easy matter to draw a subsistence from it for themselves. Yet there can be no doubt that the soil is now as capable of being made to produce grain as formerly, were a numerous and agricultural people permitted to occupy it.

Egypt also, in the days of its prosperity, sustained a population of 40 millions of people†, who not only reared

* See Wallace on the Numbers of Mankind, p. 56.

† *Diodorus Siculus* relates, that more than 1700 males were born in Egypt on the same day which gave birth to the famous Sesostris. The father of this monarch ordered all these boys to be brought to.

reared abundance of food at all times for themselves, but the country was at the same time capable of supplying other nations for many ages to a great amount. Its population now, according to the statement of the French in that country, does not exceed 3 millions; yet so much are they stinted in provisions, that it was not without great difficulty, and the most strenuous exertions, that an invading army of not more than 25,000 men could draw their subsistence from it.

Palestine, which is represented by modern travellers as one of the most barren countries on the globe; which cannot, without great difficulty, be made to produce as much corn as affords a miserable subsistence to a few in-

to court, and educated as companions with his son. If as many were born every day (which we must be allowed to assume, as there is no reason for distinguishing that day from any other), there must have been born in one year not fewer than 620,500 males; from which it follows, according to Dr. *Halley's* calculation, that there were more than 17,000,000 of males in Egypt at that *early age*; and allowing an equal number of females, the whole people amounted to more than 34,000,000.

According to the accounts of Herodotus, Egypt was very populous in the days of *Amasis*, who lived a little before the founding of the Persian empire by Cyrus: in the reign of this king it contained 20,000 cities, all inhabited. At this rate, allowing 2000 to each city, the number of people amounted to 40,000,000.

The splendour of some of these cities has been often mentioned. Besides *Memphis*, the capital, *Thebes* has been celebrated by Homer for its hundred gates, out of each of which marched 200 men, with horses and chariots, in all 20,000. But Tacitus, an author of much greater credit, and far from being credulous, gives us a still more magnificent idea of its inhabitants, by computing the number of fighting men at 700,000; the quadruple of which, or 2,800,000, being the number of its inhabitants, shows it to have been about four times more populous than London.

habitants thinly scattered over the face of the country, is known to have contained, during the flourishing part of the Jewish government, above 7 millions of people*; and to have sustained them in abundance with its own produce, not only without difficulty, but with the utmost ease; for, such was the affluence there, that every seventh (sabbatical) year the whole country was not only left untilled, but even the spontaneous produce was not suffered to be gathered: still, however, there was abundance, and to spare, so long as *people* abounded: when these people were dispersed and driven away, sterility and want returned. Palestine is admitted to be at present much

* We learn from sacred writ (Chron. xxi. 56), that the fighting men, exclusive of the two tribes of Levi and Benjamin, were 1,570,000; and if we take the proportions of these two to the other ten tribes from their enrolments (marked Numb. i. 4), we must add more than 121,000: the whole number of fighting men amounting by this account to 1,691,000: this multiplied by 4, makes the whole number of the inhabitants to be 6,764,000. But from the 4th chapter, of Numbers, it appears that the Levites ought to have been estimated as more numerous, so that we may safely set them down at 7,000,000.

In other passages we find equal indications of the amazing populousness of this small kingdom (not one sixth part the size of England). We find the two kings of Judah and Israel bringing into the field no less than 1,200,000 chosen men (2 Chron. xiii. 3); Amaziah, who was only king of Judah and Benjamin, had an army of 300,000 choice men (ib. xxv. 5); Uzziah, his successor, had 307,500 (ib. xxvi. 13); and Aza, one of his predecessors in the same kingdom, had yet a greater army, consisting of 580,000 (ib. xiv. 8): Jehothaphat, the son of Aza, had the greatest of all, consisting of 1,160,000 (ib. xvii.). What a prodigious army must he have commanded had he been sovereign of all the tribes, and to what an amazing degree of productiveness must that country have been brought, to be able to support such an immense population!!!

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more sterile than England, though not above one sixth part of its size; if so, admitting that England was equally barren, it ought to be able to sustain with ease, at least 42 millions, were it possessed of people to that extent, and were they to exert themselves in properly cultivating the soil.

The northern parts of Africa, in general, are at the present time ranked among the class of barren regions, and cannot without difficulty be made to produce provisions enough to supply the wants of a very scanty population. But during the flourishing period of the Carthaginian empire, while agriculture constituted a principal business among them, though the population of that and the adjoining states was exceedingly great*, the produce

* The population of Carthage can only be guessed at from the vigour of her enterprises for many ages: as an agricultural nation, she long remained unnoticed by historians, cultivating her fields with a peaceful industry, and enjoying tranquillity with abundance. It was during that period of obscurity that her population silently increased, which enabled her afterwards to send out those numerous armies which she had abroad; and it was during that æra that those agricultural works were written which were so much esteemed by her conquerors. When commercial wealth accumulated, and the ambition that it so naturally inspires was cherished, she grasped at foreign settlements, first in Spain, and afterwards in Sicily, which engendered wars that ended only with the final destruction of the state. The armies they sent out were very great. In the days of Gelon, King of Syracuse, according to *Diodorus Siculus*, they sent at one time a fleet of 2000 ships of war, and 3000 transports, with an army of 300 000 men on board, under the command of Hamilcar. Under Hamilcar's grandson they sent another great army in a fleet of 60 great ships, and 1500 transports, which, according to the same author, consisted of 200,000 foot and 4000 horse. Soon after they sent another grand fleet and army, under the same commander, consisting, according

produce of their own fields was found abundantly sufficient to support the whole; nor was it till towards the latter end of the republic, when the desire of conquests and commercial enterprizes allured a great body of the people from the peaceful labours of the field, that they ever had recourse to foreign countries for subsistence; when their conquests in Spain and in Sicily began to diminish their home population, by the numerous armies they were obliged to send abroad in defence of these settlements, and allured them from the cultivation of their own soil, by the greater facility which other employments afforded for accumulating wealth, then, and not till then, were they obliged to draw from Sicily some corn to supply the deficiency at home which these drains had occasioned.

Sicily was always esteemed a fertile country, abounding with people; and during its most flourishing period, while it contained a population extremely great*, it produced

to Ephorus, of 300,000 men, in a fleet of 1000 transports, besides many ships of war. Not long afterwards they sent an army against the elder Dionysius, of 300,000 foot, 4000 horse, 400 chariots, with a fleet of 400 ships, and 600 transports. These immense armies, which now could scarcely find subsistence in the ancient territories of that state for one month, indicate a prodigious population: nor were the neighbouring states at that time less populous, less agricultural, or less in want of provisions from abroad than the dominions belonging to Carthage. *Valerius Maximus* relates, that Massinissa, King of Numidia, made agriculture so flourish, that he left his country, which he had found sterile and desolate, full of all kinds of wealth and abundance.

* The population of Sicily may be guessed at from that of its principal cities. Agrigentum alone contained 200,000 fighting men, which makes the population at least 800,000. Syracuse, though its territories must have been very small, was so powerful at the time of the expedition of Xerxes against Greece, that Gelon, according

duced grain in abundance, not only to support its own immense population, but to furnish an almost inexhaustible supply to all the nations around who chose to subject themselves to the trouble and expense of drawing it from thence, and the risks to which that dependant situation subjected them. In short, at that period the quantity of produce seems to have depended on the demand, rather than on the power of production. At the present day, when the population of that fine island is reduced almost to nothing, its productiveness is proportionally diminished; insomuch, that at this moment, when we are in so much want of corn, it does not appear that we can draw from them (even under the most friendly dispositions of that government) one single bushel to alleviate our distress.

Rome was for many ages after its foundation an agricultural country, and her population continued to increase in a rapid degree, notwithstanding the uninter-

according to Herodotus, made offer, if the Greeks would give him the chief command, to join the confederacy, and bring along with him 200 triremes, and 20,000 men completely armed, 2000 horse, 2000 bowmen, 2000 light-horse; and, besides, *to furnish all the Greek army with corn during the whole time of the war.* The elder Dionysius ventured to make war against the Carthaginians when they were in the height of their power; with which view he prepared, in a short time, 140,000 shields, as many darts and helmets, and a great quantity of other arms of various sorts; a fleet of 200 new, and another of 110 old ships, perfectly well prepared, and began the war with 80,000 foot, 3000 horse, 200 ships of war, and 500 transports. The younger Dionysius had an army of 100,000 foot, 10,000 horse, a fleet of 400 ships of war, with magazines of provisions and treasures sufficient to maintain and to pay them. Yet the whole of Sicily is not so large as the fifth part of England, and the kingdom of Syracuse did not constitute one third part of it.

rupted, and destructive wars that she waged with the populous states around her : so powerful and so populous indeed were those states, that, notwithstanding the numerous armies which Rome sent forth from her gates at every campaign, it was nearly five hundred years before the Roman territory extended above twenty miles around the walls of that aspiring city*. During all that period, these

* The simplicity of manners of the ancient Roman senators has been frequently taken notice of by historians, and their moderation held up as an example to future ages. In the year of Rome 292, Cincinnatus the dictator had only four jugera, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, on the produce of which he supported his family. Atillius Regulus, in the time of the first Punic war, had only seven jugera, or $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres. In such an humble style did the Roman patricians then live, the plebeians being at the same time allowed two jugera, or $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres to a family. While they lived in this state of industrious simplicity, their population increased so fast as greatly to accumulate in spite of the continual destruction that was produced by the almost endless wars in which they were engaged. Livy has observed, that at the first census 80,000 Roman citizens were enrolled : this was about the 175th year of the city. In the year 245 the census consisted of 130,000 ; in the year 256, 150,000 were enrolled ; and between the 400th and 500th year, it varied between 250,000 and 292,224 : these were free citizens only ; which last gives a population of 1,169,888, besides slaves, which were probably double that number. During the greater part of this period the Roman territory was very small. At the death of Camillus, about 388 years after the building of the city, the Roman territory did not extend above twenty or twenty-four miles round Rome, so that the population must have been very great ; yet they were all supported abundantly : nor were the other states in Italy at that time less populous, so that they were enabled to make a strong resistance to the Roman arms, and greatly check their progress. Eutropius remarks, that about the 420th year of the city, the Romans began to be powerful, for they carried on a war with Samnium, almost thirty miles from Rome : it was only about
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these armies were not only easily recruited among those populous states, but were all abundantly supplied with provisions from the produce of their own fields; nor was it till toward the end of the republic, when the immense
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its 450th year that they made any considerable impression on Etruria. The war with the Tarentines began about the year 477; so that these states had been able to oppose a strong barrier against the progress of the aspiring Romans.

The numbers of people that were slain in these continued contests cannot be ascertained; but from the following facts it will appear obvious that they must have been very great. During the war with the Samnites, they not only killed very great armies in the field, but even put the inhabitants of whole cities to the sword. Thus they treated *Aufona*, *Minturnæ*, *Vescia*, and *Luceria*, destroying, as Livy expresses it, the whole nation of the *Aufones*. They almost extirpated the nation of the *Æqui*; overrun and laid waste their whole country, and took forty-one of their cities, most of which they ravaged and burnt. After this two consular armies ravaged and depopulated the entire country of *Samnium*, wasting it for five months: during this time one of the consuls moved his camp forty-five, and the other eighty-six times, leaving every where signal monuments of ruin and destruction; and continuing their devastations, they at length forced the army of the *Samnites* to fly to Etruria; upon which they immediately attacked their cities, and in a few months plundered *Murgantia*, in which they took 2100 Samnites; *Romulea*, in which they killed 3200, and took 6000 prisoners; *Ferentinum*, in which they killed 3000. And during the course of this war they made themselves masters of *Milionia*, killing 3200, and taking 4200 prisoners; *Amiternum*, killing almost 2800, and making 4270 prisoners; *Duronia*, much of the same strength; *Cominium*, where 4380 were killed, and 15,400 made prisoners: this city and *Aquilonia* they plundered and burnt in one day. They took likewise *Volana*, *Palumbinum*, and *Herculaneum*, in which three cities 10,000 were killed or taken prisoners; as also *Sapium*, where they killed 3400, and took 3000 prisoners. The recital of these transactions makes the mind shudder.

sums that individuals acquired by the plunder of distant provinces, introduced that amazing disparity of ranks which then prevailed; and when the people were allured from the peaceful labours of the field, to augment the number of retainers of those aspiring citizens who aimed at inordinate power, that they were reduced at length to rely on foreign nations for support* ; during which period it is painful to detail the distresses to which on this account they were subjected, though it ought not to be uninteresting at the present hour to point out the multiplied evils which took their rise from this source.

We have hitherto met with no instance of plenty being diminished in any nation in consequence of a numerous population, but have in every case found it to be directly the reverse; nor shall we find the rule to fail on drawing nearer to our own times: a superabundance of population has always been the result of a taste for

der with horror; yet it affords the clearest evidence of an immense population in all these states, which were supported in abundance by the produce of their own fields.

[I have been chiefly indebted to Mr. Wallace (on the Numbers of Mankind) for the facts respecting the particulars stated in the foregoing notes.]

* In the writings of Cato, Varro, and Columella, innumerable passages occur illustrative of these positions, all of them deeply deploring the miserable changes that had taken place. "The earth," says Columella, "has not become old, but it is neglected, and from that cause alone it has become sterile." In the writings of Cicero, Pliny, and Tacitus, frequent allusions to the same subject occur, which indicate the change that had taken place in this respect towards the end of the republic. "Formerly," said Tacitus, "corn used to be carried from Italy to supply the distant provinces, nor is it barren at this hour; but we rather choose to cultivate Africa and Egypt, and thus expose the lives of the Roman people to various accidents." I might fill many pages with quotations of a similar sort.

agriculture,

agriculture, and plenty has invariably been the attendant of that augmented population ; nor will Spain afford an exception to this rule. Fortunately in some respects for Europe, the Moors, a civilized people, made a conquest of that country, when the natives there, as in all other parts of Europe then, were immersed in ignorance and barbarism : they taught the natives, by their own example, to cultivate the soil, and to enjoy the comforts of social life. A degree of prosperity that had till that time been unknown in Europe was the consequence ; the population of the south of Spain augmented to an extraordinary degree, and brought with it an abundance of every thing that was necessary for the convenience and comfort of life. What was the precise number of Moors in Spain at the period of their highest prosperity, cannot now be ascertained ; but it is known, that in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, when the kingdom of Grenada was subdued, after a cruel struggle of several centuries, in which many millions of people must have been exterminated, the actual population of Spain amounted to 25 millions, two thirds of whom, at least, were placed in those southern provinces of the kingdom which had been under the power of the Moors : the population of these provinces, therefore, must have been then exceedingly great ; yet that part of the country, which for two hundred years past has been comparatively a desert, was not only found to be then sufficient to furnish all the necessaries of life in abundance to its numerous inhabitants, but even luxuries and elegancies also to an immense extent. Even in the days of Philip II. after these unhappy people had experienced a severity of oppression for more than a hundred years, that is, perhaps, unequalled in the annals of time ; and when he

was preparing to drive from his dominions an immense multitude of his best subjects, representations were given in to him, stating the miserable consequences that must result to the remaining inhabitants if such measure should be carried into effect, which give the most unequivocal proofs of its high degree of productiveness at that time*.

* There is in existence a history of the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, written at the time by a clergyman, whose name I do not recollect, which I met with in the library of the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland, wherein all the original deliberations, edicts, and orders that were issued respecting that wonderful transaction ; together with the representations, petitions, and memorials against it, are preserved, which renders it a work of inestimable value to us, as we there obtain more authentic evidences of the actual state of that country at the time than can easily be found of any other. From these incontrovertible documents it appears, that the southern provinces of Spain, even at that time, were both populous and productive to an astonishing degree ; and that, notwithstanding the blindness and the bigotry of the court and clergy, there were not wanting a numerous body of men who were able to appreciate justly the consequences of that astonishing transaction : in these representations we find many animated pictures of the then present state of the south of Spain, contrasted with what it must be brought to, should the proposed measure be carried into effect. These pictures are very strong ; but it is found that they fall far short of what the state of that country at present exhibits. The imagination of man, even when we may presume there prevailed a desire to represent things in the very worst light of which they were susceptible, though it was able to trace the train of events, could not conceive the *degree* of deterioration to which they would lead. Among other particulars, these memorialists represent that in the vale of Valencia alone, there were at that time no less than 119 sugar-mills, all of which they predicted must be inevitably ruined should that event take place. The prediction has been so exactly fulfilled, that the very tradition of such sugar-works having ever existed, is lost amongst the present inhabitants of that country.

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By a succession of political insanities that can be equalled in no other nation, the total population of Spain has been gradually diminished till it is now dwindled to 8 millions, at the most, which is less than one third of its former population; but in the southern provinces the probability is, that the population does not amount to one fifth part of what it was at the most flourishing period of the Moorish empire. Yet at this very hour, instead of plenty, the people are labouring under a great want of provisions; and there is every reason to believe, that on this account its scanty population is in danger of being still farther diminished.

It is a melancholy consideration, that in this discussion all my illustrations have been afforded by instances of deterioration, occasioned by a want of population, without one example to be found (if our own experience during the first half of the present century be not admitted as such) of abundance increasing in proportion to an increase of population. I have been able to find but one other, and that is only an approximation to it after all.

During several centuries, the Netherlands, under the dukes of Burgundy and succeeding princes, enjoyed a degree of prosperity that no other country of Europe could boast: the extent of these territories was inconsiderable, but their population was very great. During that happy period of time, Antwerp was the centre of the commerce of the whole world, and the countries around it were the seat of more numerous manufactures than were to be found any where else; but at the same time that these two great departments of business were there carried on with activity, agriculture was equally cherished; and, being suffered to advance with a

steady progress without interruption for ages, the practice of it was carried to a degree of perfection that it has never yet attained in any other kingdom of Europe. This state had the good fortune not to be seduced by the fascinating allurements of distant possessions; and thus, being in a great measure freed from the temptations of war, and the derangements that necessarily result from it, advanced in a peaceful prosperity till she attained a most enviable pre-eminence among the nations. This quiet, however, was disturbed at last by the injudicious bigotry of the Spanish court; and after a most serious and bloody conflict, continued for nearly half a century, a part of these states were compelled to submit to the law prescribed by their opponents, and another portion of them were declared to be free and independent states. Antwerp, by these regulations, was ruined; and Amsterdam, before that time an inconsiderable place, began to rear its head among its marshes, and soon acquired a degree of population and of wealth that could not have been expected. The whole province of Holland, though it had indeed before that time *begun* to clear its fields from water, had proceeded in these operations so short a way, that it could be accounted little else than a series of marshes: since then, in consequence of its increased population, the exertions to procure food at home have been such, as to have brought into a state of high productiveness many thousands of acres which were buried under the sea, and which are now furnishing abundant crops annually to supply the people. Under the influence of the concentrated population of Holland, the draining of the Pontine marshes near Rome, which were at one time the most fertile fields of Italy, but are now the most pestiferous lands on the globe, would have been deemed
a work

a work of the greatest facility, and they would have esteemed the gift of such a tract as a boon whose value they could scarcely estimate. Thus it is in every case: wherever the arm of industry is not prevented from cultivating the fields, an augmented population has no other effect than to add to the power of removing obstructions, and to give energy to enterprises under which a more feeble population must have entirely succumbed.

One singularity, however, is observable in regard to the Netherlands, which ought not to be overlooked on this occasion. Though the commerce of Antwerp was ruined by the shutting up of the Scheld, and though the prosperity of that city immediately declined; though its wealthy merchants abandoned that abode, and many of its manufacturers went elsewhere, the stability of its agriculture still preserved it from sinking—its farmers remained: its population was thus prevented from dwindling to nothing, as must ever be the case where trade and manufactures are the chief employments of the people; and at this moment, in spite of that great reverse of fortune, and in spite of the numerous wars that the extreme productiveness of that country has in some measure drawn into it, and in which the inhabitants themselves took no part, it is justly accounted among the most populous districts in Europe. This affords a striking example of the stability that results from agricultural pursuits, when compared with those of any other sort.

RECAPITULATION.

I have thus endeavoured to show, from the evidence of facts that admit of no denial, that for a period of more than half a century, during which the population of this country was advancing in as rapid a progression as it was ever perhaps known to do; but during which time its agriculture was also cherished by the protection of wise laws, the productiveness of it not only kept pace with that progression, but so far outran it as to produce a great and continually increasing excess of grain for exportation, with a steady lowness of price unexampled in the history of this nation; but when these laws were altered, the deficiency of crops soon became apparent; importation of grain became necessary to supply our wants, which excess of importation hath advanced with a rapid progression until the present hour, and a progressional rise in the price of corn has been its necessary and baneful attendant; it has been also proved by the experience of France, that exactly similar effects resulted from similar causes about a century ago in that country. I have endeavoured to show, by a chain of the closest reasoning, grounded on the most indisputable principles of agricultural knowledge, that an increase of population has a constant, natural, and necessary tendency, if measures are not adopted to divert the people from agricultural exertions (not to diminish the plenty of grain, or to enhance its proportional price in any country, but on the contrary) to augment the surplus of produce, and to diminish the price of corn; so that our own experience during the first half of this century was precisely what might have been, and may always be expected to take place in every country under similar circumstances.

circumstances. I have then had recourse to the unbiassed evidence of historical records to establish the truth or the falsity of this reasoning; and, by a faithful deduction of facts through a series of ages, we have found innumerable cases of general notoriety, confirming with undeniable certainty the truth of these positions, without one single instance of even a doubtful nature occurring. We have every where found the greatest plenty at that period of time precisely when the population of the countries that we have examined was at the highest point, or until the exertions of agricultural industry were depressed by some predilection being entertained for other more ostentatious employments; but from that period of time, the scarcity of corn beginning to be experienced, population also began to decrease, till, at length, by a continuance of that deteriorating progress, those countries which were once populous and productive to an extraordinary degree, have become deserted and so sterile withal, as scarcely to be able to preserve in existence, perhaps, one hundredth part of their former inhabitants, who wallowed in wealth and abundance.

So far indeed is an increased population, to those who have adverted to subjects of this sort, likely to occasion a diminution of produce, that it appears to them, as it does to me, in a very different light. The Abbé Mann, who seems to have juster notions of agriculture than men in his station in life usually possess, in his excellent Memoir on the Agriculture of the Netherlands, takes notice that the land of Waes “ is a perfect flat, and is reckoned the richest part of Flanders: the original soil was pure sand, and its present fertility is owing to the *great number* of its *industrious inhabitants*.” And of the district of Bruges, he says, “ although the main constituent of it (the soil)

be every where a light sand, in many parts continual manuring and cultivation have rendered it extremely rich ; in some spots, for want of these, it is less so ; *but a more extensive population would soon bring them into the same state as the rest.*" P. 232.

If these facts, when thus connected, do not serve to remove the fears of those who doubt the possibility of this country producing abundance to sustain its increasing population, were it to augment in a ratio greatly more progressive than it has yet done, I should doubt whether they could be convinced of it, were one even to rise from the dead to tell them so.

Still, however, it remains to be shown, that the diminution which has been experienced in the agricultural produce of this country, though it was undoubtedly begun by an injudicious change in the corn-laws, is by no means to be *wholly* attributed to that cause. Other circumstances have powerfully co-operated, and have tended wonderfully to accelerate these effects. The consideration of these I defer to a future occasion ; though, till that be done, we shall not be in a condition to point out such remedies that may still be in our power as are likely to check the progress at least, if not entirely to remove those evils which are at present so hard to bear, and which hold out so threatening a prospect. It ought at least to afford us some degree of comfort to have a feeling conviction, that no physical causes stand in the way to oppose our progress ; and that the difficulties are entirely of a moral nature, which bring them more under the influence of human wisdom to overcome than would otherwise have been the case. Not to leave the mind of the reader, however, in a state of gloomy despondency, I shall, before I conclude, give him one practical illustration

tion of the means that remain in our power for augmenting the productiveness of this country to a great extent ; though hundreds of others remain that are equally within our reach, if ever the time shall arrive when agriculture shall be considered as a business that deserves and requires the protecting influence of wisdom in council, and steadiness in the execution of law and justice.

Every person who has but heard of agriculture knows, that animal manure, when applied to the soil, tends to add to its fertility ; of course, he must be sensible, that every circumstance which tends to deprive the soil of that manure ought to be accounted an uneconomical waste highly deserving of blame : but few are acquainted with the amazing extent of waste that is suffered universally to take place in every part of England, or the astonishing influence that this must have in diminishing the amount of our agricultural produce. I shall therefore select one *item* only of this large account, with a view to give some idea of the consequences that would result from an attention to this particular under a judicious management.

The city of London, and its suburbs, by the lowest estimate that I have seen, contain at the present time about seven hundred thousand souls (Mr. Colquhoun's estimate is double that number). The manure arising directly from this immense population is entirely lost to the purposes of agriculture. Now I assume it as an agricultural position, which I am ready to defend against all gainsayers, that were it carefully preserved, and judiciously applied to the soil, as much would be afforded by every one thousand persons each day as would be sufficient to manure, in a very ample manner, one acre

of ground* ; the increased produce of which, under skilful management, could scarcely be less than *two* quarters of grain ; but for the present we shall only state it at *one* : and farther, that it is possible, under a very judicious

* The data on which I ground this estimate are as follow :

Five hundred Wiltshire ewes and lambs are accounted enough to manure an acre in one night when folded upon it. At that rate, were none of the manure lost, it ought to be sufficient for two acres, for the sheep are not near half their time in the fold. I conceive that one human being will be admitted to equal in this respect at least two Wiltshire sheep, which would make the one equal at least four times the other. But to this must be added the blood and offals of 110,000 bullocks, 770,000 sheep, 800,000 lambs, 300,000 pigs, besides those of turkies, ducks, fowls, pigeons, rabbits innumerable, and game of many sorts ; as well as the scrapings of fish, refuse of vegetables, refuse from washings, and a variety of other articles useful as manures, which are all now suffered to run to waste. Taking all together, it will appear the estimate is very moderate, though we take no account of the scrapings of the streets, now also in a great measure wasted. In this estimate, stable dung, which is now generally employed as manure, is entirely excluded.

I am aware that a taste for cleanliness will be pleaded as a bar to this proposal, as I know that pretexts are never wanting against every proposed improvement ; but that this plea originates merely in a flatterly slovenliness is demonstrated by the practice of the Dutch, who are allowed to be the most scrupulously cleanly people in Europe, in as far as concerns their habitations at least, who would believe that they would be suffocated in filth, were they not permitted carefully to remove this cause of disgust at frequent and convenient times ; and the consequence of that uninterrupted attention to cleanliness in regard to this particular is, that they are well paid for their trouble ; every particle of this valuable manure being sold at a very high price. Of so much consequence is this article there esteemed, that certain public officers are appointed in every town to judge of its quality, to guard against abuses in this article, and to regulate the price of it, in case of disputes concern-

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judicious and skilful management, to preserve *that soil for ever after*, without the addition of any *extraneous manures*, in the same state of fertility that it has thus been made to attain; and not only so, but even to augment beyond that. But for our present purpose we shall say that its extra produce declines in the second year to one half that of the former year, being only four bushels; and that the third year it declines still one half of the former, being only two bushels of extra produce; at which rate we shall say it continues in all future time. Every experienced farmer (Scotch at least) will see, that I make all these statements greatly below the truth, in order that every appearance of exaggeration may be avoided. It will as well answer the purpose of illustration; for, though it will not indicate the precise amount, it will convey a sufficient idea of the nature of the improvement.

Seven hundred acres a day then is $(700 \times 365 =)$ 255,500 acres per annum; the extra produce of which the first year, being by the position one quarter, amounts to 255,500 quarters. The second year that field, by the position, yields half a quarter of extra produce, which is 127,750 quarters; and there being

ing it. Whereas in London, this immense quantity of filth is daily carried to the Thames, in its passage to which it subjects the people in the lower part of the city to the most offensive effluvia, which would be totally insufferable during rains to every person who had not been inured to it from his infancy, but even to whom it is certainly extremely pernicious. And it no sooner reaches the Thames than it is instantly pumped up to fill the cisterns of nearly half the inhabitants of the city, who are from thence supplied with water for culinary purposes. One would think that the people who pride themselves on this species of cleanliness, had been initiated into the sacred mysteries of the delicate Hottentots.

this year another field producing a first crop, these two added together are $(122,750 + 255,500 =)383,250$ quarters. The third year the first field produces only two bushels, or one quarter of the original, or 63,875 extra produce, and the second one half. They will then stand thus: $63,875 + 127,750 + 245,500 = 429,725$ quarters. As the produce is now supposed to continue at the last-named rate, these particulars reduced into a tabular form would stand thus, each line in the table representing the extra produce of the year indicated on the left hand from the commencement :

	Fifth Year.	Fourth Year.	Third Year.	Second Year.	First Year's Produce.	Total Produce.
1st year					$255,500 = 255,500$	
2d year				$127,750 + 255,500 = 383,250$		
3d year			$63,875 + 127,750 + 255,500 = 447,125$			
4th year		$63,875 + 63,875 + 127,750 + 255,500 = 511,000$				
5th	$63,875 + 63,875 + 63,875 + 127,750 + 255,500 = 574,875$					

Thus it appears, that at the end of the 5th year, the extra produce arising from this source would amount to 574,875 quarters. It was unnecessary to carry this table farther, because it is obvious, from the above, that the extra excess of each year above the former will amount to 63,875 quarters; so that, to obtain the amount of that increased produce in any succeeding year, it is only necessary to multiply 63,875 by the number of years from the former period, and add that to the total you have already obtained. Thus

The tenth year } $63,875 \times 5 = 319,375 + 574,875 = 894,250$
 it would be }
 On the 20th year $63,875 \times 10 = 638,750 + 894,250 = 1,533,100$
 On the 30th year $63,875 \times 10 = 638,750 + 1,533,100 = 2,171,850$
 On the 50th year $63,875 \times 20 = 1,277,500 + 2,171,850 = 3,449,350$
 On the 100th year $63,875 \times 50 = 3,193,750 + 3,449,350 = 6,643,100$

This example will afford one striking instance of the amazing effects that would result from an attentive economy, continued steadily for a sufficient length of time, under a judicious system of rural management, were a due attention paid to that business. When I farther state the amazing waste of running water every where, that is suffered to flow on in its course to the sea without any application of it to the purposes of agriculture*: the waste of the dung of many millions of animals

* Water has hitherto been little adverted to as a manure for corn lands, any where else, I believe, but in' Aberdeenshire in Scotland. In England its effects on agriculture are scarcely known unless in as far as it has been applied for the purpose of making watered meadows. This is, indeed, a very beneficial application of water, but, considered in regard to population and productiveness, I conceive it to be infinitely short of the other. These two modes of applying water might be very advantageously combined. In Britain, were the uses of water as a manure properly understood, and the whole of it applied to that purpose with a rigid economy, I have not a doubt but it might be enabled by that means alone to support more than four times its present population in the course of one century. I quote the following passage from Montesquieu, not less for the beautiful lesson it gives in political economy, than as an illustration of the uses of water in agriculture: " Lorsque les Perses étoient maitres de l'Asie, ils permettoient à ceu qui améneroient de l'eau de fontaine, en quelque lieu qui n'auroit point été encore arrosé, d'en jouir pendant cinq generations. Et comme il sorte quantité de ruisseaux du mont Taurus, ils n'épargnérent, aucune depense pour en faire de l'eau.

Aujourd-

animals dropped on the pastures every where without any beneficial effect (see *Essays on Agriculture*, vol. iii. essay 3): the great neglect of lime and other calcareous manures; and, added to this, the similar waste of animal manure in every town in the kingdom, I am satisfied that the single instance of waste above stated, and its consequences, does not amount to one hundredth part of the total loss that is annually incurred in Britain from these combined sources of waste. With such proofs of the power placed in our hands of relieving all our wants, how like to insanity must it be considered; what wickedness ought it not to be deemed in any man or body of men, to contrive plans, and adopt measures that have a direct tendency to render us dependant on other nations for our support!! Yet it is a melancholy truth, that there is a great and powerful body of men continually upon the watch to seize every opportunity to grasp at the smallest opening, and to leave no possible means untried to blindfold the eyes of leading men in the nation by deceptive, though plausible representations, and to make use of every popular phrenzy for forwarding their views! Unhappily for this country, their sway of late years has been too fatally preponderating in the councils of this nation. To give some idea of the nature of this malady and its influence, the following observations are added.

Aujourd'hui, sans savoir d'où il peut venir, on la trouve dans ses champs, & dans ses jardins." How beautiful are the effects of beneficence when directed by wisdom! What wonderful effects may thus be produced without any other effort than that of loosening the chains with which ignorance and folly have bound up the hands of more than half the human race!

ON THE INFLUENCE OF IMPORTERS OF CORN, AND
MONOPOLIZERS, ON THE PRICE OF GRAIN.

For very obvious reasons, it must be the interest of corn-merchants to reduce this country to a state of dependance on other nations for bread-corn, because no other species of trade whatever affords such immense scope for monopoly and extravagant gain as that of importing foreign corn; and, indeed, importers have it so entirely in their power to ruin the agriculture of this nation whenever they please, if they be not restrained by salutary laws*, that it is no wonder to see such men assiduous beyond all bounds in propagating the opinions of such a popular writer as Dr. Adam Smith, when they find it so much in favour of their views. When they had no such powerful coadjutor as this, their efforts were uninterrupted, though for a long time the wisdom of parliament kept them in check; but since the circulation of that popular book, they have gained such an ascendancy of power, as to make them able to carry every thing before them, till they have brought the nation to the brink of destruction. It is high time that this baneful influence should be subdued: and, though I do not flatter myself with the hope that my feeble efforts will be sufficient to do that, yet they may do something. At any rate, I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have done what was within my power.

The judicious Mr. Dirom, so often quoted in this work, after having in his book frequently taken notice

* Observe that I carefully discriminate between merchants *importers* of corn and *exporters* of it; for their powers are very different.

of these efforts, and the pertinacity with which they were persisted in, says—"There must be (p. 128) something very seductive, or very profitable, in the importation of foreign grain; for all the laws that hitherto have been made to prevent it, have been evaded; and yet, except the importer, it is clearly against the interest of every other person in the kingdom: for it is destructive of our own agriculture: and we have seen, from certain evidence, that it raises the price of grain upon the consumer.

"We have also learned, from the experience of past times, that no laws, nor any dictates of human authority, can oblige people to cultivate the lands, to build houses of husbandry, or to labour in that or any other vocation by which they cannot earn a reasonable subsistence."

The gentlemen to whom I here allude are well aware of this *last* circumstance; and it is upon their faith in it that they ground their too well founded hope of effecting their purpose, if they can only be permitted. On this principle their aim is, to exert all their endeavours to render the prices of corn fluctuating and unsteady; and this as little depending on the amount of our own crops as possible, well knowing that this is the sure and infallible means of disgusting our farmers with the plough; and if, by these means, they can once get our produce to be permanently below our consumption, they have the ball at their foot, and all will go on as they could wish. On these principles, having obtained a law to permit importations at low prices on low duties, and also permission to warehouse corn as much as they choose, a few monied men have it in their power to bring forward any quantity of corn they please at a particular time, so as to

check the farmers' sales, and make the prices fall below prime cost; and this without any loss to themselves, for they can sometimes buy corn of an inferior quality abroad at very low prices; and, being able sometimes also to sell it at very large profit, they can dispose of a little, to serve a particular purpose, even below prime cost, without sustaining at the time any real loss, and with a view to future profit. By manœuvres of this sort the British farmers have been disgusted with the raising of corn, and many of them have been induced to abandon the plough and lay their land into grass. Thus the quantity of corn reared has gradually diminished; our importations have necessarily increased; we are reduced to want; the prices rise; and here we are at the mercy of the foreign corn-dealers, and foreign nations. Under these circumstances let any man but seriously reflect on what a tempting bait it offers to a few men of commanding capitals to make almost what profits they please. Were the trade regularly established in that train, such a set of men may, more easily than any others, engage foreign individual corn-dealers to deal with nobody but themselves; foreseeing a deficient crop here, they may also monopolize the whole corn at the time in foreign markets, and keep it there till such a scarcity is here apprehended, that parliament shall be induced to ensure them a certain price (as is done at this moment). They may then bring it in, sell it hastily at a low price, to reduce the market while they are ensured; buy it in again at that time by their inferior agents, and then, by withholding corn for a time, raise the price once more. In short, it would be no difficult matter for five or six individuals, with the command of a million or two of capital (and such a capital, including credit, would be nothing extraordinary), to regulate the prices

in the London market so as to suit their wishes. Such a powerful body of men might even monopolize the shipping at a particular time ; and as to little dealers who should interfere in their trade, these they could crush in a moment by a thousand oppressions ; but, above all, by sinking the markets for that purpose below prime cost when they knew that these little men were obliged to sell *. These are obvious procedures ; but the ingenuity of such men, when steadily directed to one object, would soon enable them to contrive many devices that others have never thought of ; and which their power would enable them to carry into effect with a commanding facility. Of all the evils that can befall a nation, that of being under the overpowering influence of large importers, but especially those of the necessaries of life, is

* Some years ago a set of monied men, I am told, entered into a combination to monopolize all old ships and stores that were disposed of by the lords of the admiralty ; for this purpose, whenever any person not of their own gang made his appearance at a sale, he was sure to be outbid by some of them until the thing was raised, if possible, above its intrinsic value ; and then, if they could, it was let fall to his hand. In this way, unconnected persons finding in a short time that no reasonable bargains could be obtained at these sales, thought it no longer necessary to go thither. The fraternity of jobbers, being numerous, always attended these sales, and bid against each other to keep up the appearance of competition ; but it may be easily guessed how far that competition went.— Things, thus conducted, were usually bought at one fourth part of their value, or less ; and the concern went on in this thriving state for many years, till at last it was discovered, and a device adopted to prevent such nefarious proceedings in this instance. The example of Mr. Waddington shows how far some men will go, when they think the law may be evaded with impunity—and the well-understood management of the fishmongers in the supply of the London market, is another instance of the vigilance with which the interest of dealers is attended to in matters of this sort.

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the greatest. There is, therefore, no one evil against which the legislature should be so much upon its guard as this. It was precisely by circumstances of this sort, that the Roman commonwealth was overthrown. Amazing capitals, being once obtained by the most nefarious means, were applied to the most destructive purposes. The morals of the common people were corrupted, industry destroyed, and a servile dependance on the rich was substituted in place of that freedom of mind which once animated all ranks of that people. They came then to depend for their subsistence upon *largesses* given by the most unprincipled classes of men; and of all the slaves that ever existed, none were ever known who acted as such willing tools of the most profligate wretches as these degenerated remains of the once respected class of Roman citizens. Whenever a nation comes to separate itself into the two classes only of *rich* and *poor*, such are the necessary and unavoidable consequences of it:—and can any thing tend more directly to effect this, than such measures as those which my feeble arm is now employed (in great probability) unavailingly to repress?

But when, superadded to this, we are obliged to be subjected to the caprice of foreign powers, by shutting their ports, or detaining our vessels, as the whim of the moment shall strike them, shall we not be reduced to the most miserable distress? Fortunate will it be, if the insane conduct of the Emperor Paul, at the present moment, shall have the effect to open our eyes, so as to make us perceive the perilous situation in which we must inevitably place ourselves, should we proceed farther in that train which hath brought us already to the very verge of destruction. If we proceed a little farther in the same train, we must be inevitably undone. It is not, perhaps, too late for us yet to recover ourselves;

but strong, and speedy, and steady, must the exertions be, that shall effect this. In vain should we look up to the superiority of our naval power to ensure us against occasional want, if we suffer our own fields to become deficient: our ships of war cannot enter into the dominions of foreign powers, to *force* the corn from their granaries; our navy cannot ensure us against the inclemency of seasons, or the destructive ravages of storms that may destroy, or retard the arrival of fleets from abroad. Could our naval superiority (were it even capable of doing all this) ensure our safety? No. No superiority, however great it may be at this moment, can be relied upon as permanent. A thousand circumstances, that we can neither foresee nor prevent, may occasion the most fatal reverses. At one time the naval superiority of Carthage was more decisively established than that which we can yet lay claim to; but a power arose, which, from not being possessed of a single ship of war, became in a few years her rival, her conqueror, her destroyer. Is it possible, that men who know what independence is, should look on with apathy while they see measures adopted that evidently lead to dependance, to misery, and ruin, and these perceptibly approaching with hasty strides? I am no alarmist. No man can face danger more steadily than myself; but to run into open danger when it might be avoided, is perfect insanity. It is time, therefore, that serious measures should be adopted, to ward off those evils which too surely threaten us.

A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE CORN LAW OF 1688 AND 1773.

The state of the corn laws ought to be the first object of legislative deliberation; and though I do not mean to enter into a minute examination of this question till a future occasion, I shall in this place, merely with

a view to give some notion of the principle and operation of these laws, for the satisfaction of such of my readers as know nothing of them, state, by way of contrast, as briefly as I can, a few facts illustrative of the principles of the corn acts 1688 and 1773, so often mentioned in this essay.

The principle of the act of 1688 was, on the one hand, to prevent the introduction of foreign corn into this country when the price was at or below the rate at which it was supposed the British farmer could afford to bring it to market in an ordinary year; thus to prevent a stagnation of market, and an inadequate price that might discourage the farmer from applying himself steadily to the production of corn: and, on the other hand, to afford such a bounty on the exportation of corn in years of plenty, as should enable our merchants to find a market in foreign countries for the surplus produce that must then be to spare, without depressing the prices to a pernicious degree. It was expected from these two precautions, that the British farmer would be induced to push with spirit his exertions in *rearing* CORN, so as to produce in an ordinary year, more corn than would be sufficient for our own consumption; in consequence of which, the deficiency that must ever be experienced in bad seasons might be made up, not so much by stinting ourselves of necessary food, as by diminishing the exportation of the portion of grain that had been raised for that purpose. In this way it was concluded, that by saving freight, and risk, and merchants profit, we should be able, not only to be better supplied with corn in bad seasons, but at a cheaper rate also, on an average of years, than if we had been obliged to resort for a supply at these times to foreign nations, which might, perhaps, be then in want of corn as well as ourselves. Never, I think, was there a prospective idea entertained by men,

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more enlightened, more judicious, or more humane, than this was. The effect of this law, as long as it was suffered to operate, it has been already shown by undeniable facts, perfectly proved the wisdom of the measure; and the facts stated in the Table pronounce an eulogium upon the contrivers of it much higher than any human eloquence could do.

This law was suffered to operate, with some partial evasions, which checked, but did not destroy its general influence, until the year 1754, when it was suspended; and was finally altered anno 1773, as has already been noticed. The tendency of these alterations will be best exhibited in the following remarks.

In stating facts, where the *price* of any commodity comes to be of consequence, it is necessary to observe, that a considerable fallacy is apt to arise from the different value that the same nominal sum bore at different periods. This occurs in the present case: The parliament in 1688 fixed on certain prices at which corn was to be permitted to be exported or imported, and certain sums to be paid in bounties, or duties, under different circumstances: the same things were done in 1773, but the rates were varied. Now, before we can form a just estimate of these circumstances, as operating either upon the farmer, the corn-merchant, or the public, we must bring these prices as nearly as we can to the intrinsic value that they bore to other commodities at the time; otherwise we do nothing. But it happened, that about the very time that this law was first enacted, the practice of borrowing money for public services (in other words, funding) was introduced, which has been continued ever since. One of the most necessary and unavoidable consequences of the funding system is, a depreciation in the value of money; and that we all know has taken place in this country

country to a very great degree. It would require a much more minute investigation than befits the present occasion, to enter into an exact valuation of the depression in price of money that has taken place between these two periods ; but for our present purpose I conceive it will be deemed near enough the truth, to state it at one third of the latter price, or as two to three of the former ; that is to say, that two nominal pounds at the Revolution would be nearly of equal value with three anno 1773 ; for I presume, that few people who have turned their attention to these subjects will be disposed to deny, that a person having at that time an income of two hundred pounds a year, could not have lived equally well, and enjoyed as many of the necessaries and conveniencies of life, that a family requires, as one who enjoyed three hundred pounds a year at the latter period ; and would have held rank in society equally respectable. From this consideration, and the facility of converting sums at that ratio, I shall proceed as if that fact were admitted.—Those who think it too high, or too low, may make such allowance on that account as they think necessary.

As the single article *wheat* will serve as a sufficient illustration, I shall solely confine myself to it for the present. By the law of 1688, a bounty of 5s. was granted for every quarter of wheat exported, when the price was at or under 48s. per quarter ; that is to say, if it were to be rated at the same price in 1773, the same sums would have been 7s. 6d. of bounty and 72s. the rate at or below which the bounty could be demanded ; which is admitting a depression in the value of these sums, respectively, in the ratio of two to three : all the other sums stated in the table below are converted after the same manner.

Comparative View of the Duties payable per Quarter on Importation, and Bounties granted on Exportation of Wheat by the Laws 1700 and 1773, when the selling Price of Wheat was as under.

Average Price of Wheat per Quarter.		By the Act of 1700.		By the Act of 1773.			
s.	d.		s.	d.	s.	d.	
120	0	Above this price, importation permitted on paying duty, per quarter of -	8	0	Importation permitted at this price on paying - - - - - duty.	0	6
80	0	Ditto ditto above this price, and not exceeding 120s. - - - - - duty	12	0	Importation still permitted - ditto	0	6
72	0	Ditto ditto when under this price, and not exceeding 80s. - - - - - duty	24	0	Importation still permitted - ditto	0	6
72	0	When under this price, exportation permitted, and an allowance granted per quarter - - - - - bounty	7	6	Importation still permitted - ditto	0	6
48	0	Ditto ditto - - - - - ditto	7	6	Exportation permitted when above this price. No bounty.		
44	0	Ditto ditto - - - - - ditto	7	6	A bounty on exportation when under this price of per quarter - - - - -	5	0
		All under this price - - - - -	7	6			

From this short statement, the difference will be very apparent, and the consequent effect upon the farmer instantly recognised. By the first law, corn was allowed to be exported, and a bounty of 7s. 6d. paid upon every quarter of wheat whenever the price fell so low as 3*l.* 12s. per quarter. By the last, no bounty was granted till the price fell to 2*l.* 4s. which is a difference of 1*l.* 8s. in the price; and even then the bounty was only 5s. That makes a difference on the whole upon each quarter of wheat of no less than 1*l.* 10s. 6d.

Again: By the law of 1688, there was payable on importation a duty of 1*l.* 4s. upon every quarter when the price did not exceed 3*l.* 19s. 3d. (say 4*l.*); when the price was above that, and not exceeding 6*l.* the duty payable was 12s. for each quarter. When the price was above 6*l.* the duty was only 8s.

By the law of 1773, importation was allowed whenever the price of wheat exceeded 2*l.* 4s. upon paying a duty of 6d. only per quarter.

By the old law, flour could not be imported at any price; by the new, it may always be imported on paying 2d. per cwt.

Thus it appears, that the spirit of the old law was to prevent importation as much as possible, and to promote exportation; and it effected the desired purpose.

The spirit of the new law is calculated to promote importation as much as possible, and annihilate exportation; and it also has effected the purpose intended*.

What

* Mr. Drom observes, in speaking of this law, that it was entitled, "An act for regulating the importation and exportation of corn;" but to carry the spirit of this law into its title, it should have been called, "An act to facilitate the importation of foreign

What consequences have resulted from effecting these two purposes?

By the operation of the old law, the prices in the home market were reduced in the course of fifty years, to the consumers in the home market, from 3*l.* to 1*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* per quarter :

By the operations of the new law, the prices have risen from 2*l.* 2*s.* 1*d.* to 5*l.* 10*s.* per quarter :

By the operation of the old law we were enabled to export corn till our excess of exports rose by degrees to the amount of more than 1 million and a half quarters in one year, which brought into the country a sum not much under 3 millions sterling ; being all for the price of our own best manufacture, and for encouraging the most useful industry that can ever be promoted in any nation :

By the operation of the new law our imports have arisen to 3 millions of quarters nearly, value more than 6 millions sterling. This makes a total balance of trade against us, in this single article, of not less than NINE MILLIONS sterling per annum ; and thus much we pay towards encouraging the industry and agriculture of other countries, and the discouragement of our own.

Now, for what good purpose do we sacrifice all these great interests? To enrich a few (too opulent) corn-dealers ; to indulge the caprice of a few idle speculators ; and to comply with popular clamours, which, if yielded to after the same manner in time to come, must end, if not in a public revolution, in an inevitable depopulation of the country.—Then shall we afford a lesson to future legislators, who may, perhaps, have the wisdom to avail themselves of it.

corn into Great Britain, and to restrain the exportation of corn the growth of that kingdom ;” for such it certainly is, and its operations have justified the title which it ought to have assumed.

CONCLUSION.

Here, for the present, I close this disquisition.—Much yet remains, and very important matter of discussion, before this subject can be fully and properly elucidated.—Whether I shall continue it or not, will depend upon the public. If I find that these remarks attract that general notice which alone can render them of any avail, I shall go on: if not, I shall neither trouble myself nor others about what, in that case, could be of no use. I am desirous, as every good subject ought to be, to contribute my mite towards the information of the public; but I have no wish to force it upon those who are not willing to receive it.—At any rate, I shall have the comfort of reflecting, that when I saw the country in danger, I was found at my post; not prepared to encourage the abettors of revolutionary principles, but ready to co-operate with all those who should be equally disposed with myself to promote the public peace and tranquillity.

Before I close this discussion, however, it may not be improper, with a view to obviate a prejudice that might arise in the minds of some readers, from an idea that so much earnestness as is expressed in the preceding pages, could scarcely have been expected, unless it proceeded from some personal interest of mine in the question:—Seeing it is but too common a case for men to write on questions of this nature with a view to disguise the truth under the pretext of elucidating it, from interested motives, it becomes a duty alike to myself and the public, who can know very little of the private situation of any man, thus unequivocally to declare, as I now do,—in the first place, that I do not know a single person who is engaged in business as a corn-importer; so that nothing I have said upon that head ought

to be considered as having an allusion to any one person whatever, but only to apply to the general nature of the business, which is fully confirmed by experience in times past, and may, from the nature of things, be expected to continue the same in all future times ; nor can any of the arguments respecting that order of men be supposed to affect in the smallest degree such persons as may have been induced, in the present state of this country, to lend their temporary aid in that line, with a view to alleviate the present distress—for such exertions I conceive to be more fairly entitled to praise than to blame. In the second place, although I have been so long in the line of agricultural concerns, as to be well able to judge of the manner in which the circumstances elucidated above, and several others that still remain to be stated, affect that body of men—yet I am now, and have been for a considerable number of years past, so entirely disengaged from any concerns of that nature, that no regulation or circumstance affecting that body of men can have any farther influence on me than on every other member of the community, each individual of whom must be deeply affected by all those circumstances that tend to prove in any way obstructive to the progress of agriculture ; and under the influence of which we are all severely suffering at this moment. Indeed, it is so long since I saw the approach of this evil, and so long since I perceived that it was in vain to attempt to stem the torrent of public prejudice that set so strongly against the progress of that most useful and most necessary of all arts, that I had long relinquished every idea of attempting it ; and though I could not help lamenting in secret the blindness of those misguided persons who entertain notions so destructive to themselves as that of looking with an evil eye on any degree of success that they can

observe in that line of business, I have not attempted to trouble others with my ideas until the present time. Instead of "kicking against the pricks," I resolved to do, as many others who have equal knowledge of things of this nature with myself have done, that is, quietly to withdraw my family from a profession, which though in my eyes it be the most engaging of any, does not meet with the same degree of protection and favour in this country as most others—I mean agriculture *properly so called*; that is to say, that employment which is concerned in rearing corn and cultivating the soil: for as to the other departments of it, I consider them as only befitting jockies, jobbers, quacks, and monopolizers. On this account, though I have brought up eight sons till they were in a condition to enter upon business, I had endeavoured to inspire them with too strong ideas of independence ever to think of inducing one of them to enter upon that employment; and I have the satisfaction to know that they are even now, at their early period of life, in a more independent situation than they probably ever could have been placed, had they lived to the age of fourscore as farmers, especially in England, unless they had had overpowering capitals, and the spirit of monopolizers. I state these things on the present occasion, not with a view to private considerations, but as facts of the most serious national concern, that ought by no means to be treated lightly. What *I* have felt, thousands of others have felt; and what has taken place with regard to my family, has taken place with millions of others who will never spend a thought upon the subject. Legislators and public men have great difficulty in obtaining a thorough knowledge of important facts, in consequence of which their judgments are often misled. I now state one,
about

about which I myself cannot be mistaken, and in respect to which in regard to others, no one who seriously wishes to obtain information can have any difficulty. Now, I beg simply to put this question to any ingenuous mind—If such be the fact, how can it fail that the progress of agriculture must decline? In vain is it, under these circumstances, that premiums and bounties, suggested too often by ignorance, and rendered alluring from caprice, are held out with a view to divert men of sense from their ordinary business in pursuit of a chimera, under the pretext of encouraging agriculture—such childish efforts only excite contempt. Agriculture can never be made to flourish in any nation but by securing the cultivator in the certainty of being able to draw the full benefit of his own exertions, without having the fruits of his labour torn from him by the power or the caprice of any one. Till this be done, were premiums given, to the amount of half the revenues of the kingdom, it never could be effected; for this would only tend to encourage knavery and *charlatanerie* (a word which I must borrow from the French, as the idea it conveys was only of late familiarized in England) instead of sober industry and accurate investigation. But in no country on the globe was ever that security given, in which agriculture did not continue to advance, without any other premium, with a steady pace that never slackened until that security was withdrawn, when it unavoidably declined, and with it every enjoyment that could render life desirable.

THE END.